

REBUILDING A NATION: THE REMOVAL OF LANDMINES AND OTHER
EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR CONDUCTED BY THE ITALIAN
AUTHORITIES UNDER ALLIED SUPERVISION IN
THE POST-FASCIST PERIOD

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Military History

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

REBUILDING A NATION: THE REMOVAL OF LANDMINES AND OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR CONDUCTED BY THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES UNDER ALLIED SUPERVISION IN THE POST-FASCIST PERIOD, by Major Roberto SPAMPANATO, 174 pages.

This thesis discussed the problem of the removal of landmines and other explosive remnants of war, as part of the complex process of stabilizing a nation after a conflict. Specifically, it examines the case study resulting from the Italian reconstruction process begun in September 1943 with the signing of two armistices, analyzing the role played by the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territory, the Allied Control Commission, and the Italian institutions in solving this impelling and challenging problem. In detail, this research examines the most relevant concerns and challenges that emerged over time and the primary solutions adopted, or at least considered. Then, it illustrates the scarce resources available to the Italian Army and, in this context, studies the processes leading to the mobilization of the Mine Clearance Companies and the establishment the *Servizio Bonifica Campi Minati* (Service of Land Reclamation of Minefields). Finally, the study concludes by providing some suggestions of possible interest for future international operations, underlining how the military leadership and therefore the officer class will be called upon to make crucial and critical decisions on which will depend the effects not only on the opposing armies but also on the civilian population. Only acting with wisdom and shrewdness will it be possible to limit to the maximum extent any further unnecessary collateral effects.

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ACRONYMS

AAI	Allied Armies in Italy
AC	Allied Commission
ACC	Allied Control Commission
AFHQ	Allied Force Headquarters
AMG	Allied Military Government
AMGOT	Allied Military Government of Occupied Territory
BCM	<i>Bonifica Campi Minati</i> (Service of Land Reclamation of Minefields)
CC.RR	<i>Carabinieri Reali</i> (Royal Carabinieri)
CCS	Combined Chief of Staff
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
HQ	Headquarters
ICBL	International Campaign to Ban Landmines
MMIA	Military Mission to the Italian Army
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
POWs	Prisoners of War
RSI	<i>Repubblica Sociale Italiana</i> (Italian Social Republic)
SCAO	Senior Civil Affair Officer
U.S.	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On March 2, 2013, in Novalesa, a small village about 53 km from Turin, the accidental roadside explosion of a wartime grenade caused severe injuries to three young men. In another incident on August 28, 2016, on a quiet Sunday afternoon in Monterenzio, near Bologna, imprudently handled ordnance from the Second World War exploded and two civilians died.¹ There are hundreds of other cases and explosives from the Second World War continue to kill, wound, and frighten in Italy today.

The surrender of the Italian Government to the Allies in September 1943 was not the end of suffering; instead, it was only the beginning. Italy fractured into two states: one under Allied occupation but nominally ruled by the Badoglio Government in the south and the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI) (Italian Social Republic) headed by the *Duce*, Benito Mussolini in the north. Direct German intervention after the Italian surrender further complicated the situation. Each one of these interested parties-Badoglio, RSI, German, and Allied-laid mines and dropped aerial bombs in an attempt to wrest control of the Italian Peninsula from the others.

¹ La Stampa, “Trovano una bomba in un prato L’ordigno esplode: gravi due ragazzi un terzo ferito al volto,” March 2, 2013, accessed March 12, 2017, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/03/02/cronaca/trovano-una-bomba-in-un-prato-l-ordigno-esplode-gravi-due-ragazzi-un-terzo-ferito-al-volto-gvB4o1AsdDKvdzEziNB0XP/pagina.html>; Ansa, “Scoppia ordigno in garage, due morti,” August 28, 2016, accessed March 10, 2017, http://www.ansa.it/emiliaromagna/notizie/2016/08/28/scoppia-ordigno-in-garage-due-morti_a0830577-9846-4d19-b395-84eb58ce29ac.html.

Purpose and Thesis Development

The scope of this thesis is to study the problem of the removal of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), which include unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance, as part of the complex process of stabilizing a nation after a conflict. Many countries in the world struggle with these difficulties resulting from the lack of the organization, capabilities, and institutional assets needed to effectively and efficiently deal with humanitarian demining.

In detail, this thesis examines the historical case study resulting from the Italian reconstruction process begun in September 1943 with the signing of the two armistices, analyzing the role played by the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territory (AMGOT), the Allied Control Commission (ACC), and the Italian institutions in solving this impelling and challenging problem.

Furthermore, this research illustrates the most relevant concerns, difficulties, and contrasts that emerged over time and subsequently, to examine the extent to which the direction and guidance provided by the Allies were useful in solving these dilemmas.

Indeed, this thesis aims to explore how the Allied experiences with the Italian reconstruction problem may prove beneficial today as part of the existing United States (U.S.) policy regarding humanitarian demining and more generally, of security force assistance operations as part of the more challenging missions aimed to restore or support legitimate governments.

Before examining the structure of this study, it is relevant to highlight that the bulk of this research relies on primary sources in both English and Italian languages. They are mainly correspondence and reports related to this topic, made available online

by the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* (the Italian National Archives), as a result of a cooperative project with the U.S National Archives and Records Administration (Washington DC),² and other documents stored at the *Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio* (Italian Engineer Corps Historical Museum).

Starting from the following pages, chapter 1 provides a comprehensive historical background of the Italian situation during the timeframe from the Allied Campaign in Sicily, to the relocation of the Italian Government in Brindisi, moving through the collapse of Fascism, and the complex decisions beyond the signing of the armistice.

Chapter 2 introduces the functions and responsibilities of the AMGOT and the ACC and describes the complex relations among them and the reformed Italian Governmental institutions in the reconstruction process, leading to their direct involvement in the demining and ERW removal operations. Then this chapter introduces the causes that originated the presence of mines and other ERW on the Italian territory, providing an overview of the consequences and effects of this problem.

Chapter 3 analyzes the most relevant challenges to the effective and efficient removal of landmines and other ERW operations and the primary solutions adopted over time or at least considered. Noteworthy among them, is the proposed plan to employ German prisoners of war (POWs) in this activity.

Chapter 4 illustrates the extremely scarce resources available to the Italian Army and in this context, examines the challenging and complex processes leading to the

² For additional details: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), accessed February 1, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_user/ricerca/ric_avn.php.

mobilization of the Mine Clearance Companies and the establishment the *Servizio Bonifica Campi Minati* (BCM) (Service of Land Reclamation of Minefields).

Finally, chapter 5, examines the main findings of this research, including an assessment of how effective and successful the mine clearance and ERW removal process eventually was. Starting from the current status of the ERW problem in Italy and around the world, the study concludes by providing some suggestions of possible interest for future international operations conducted by the U.S. and its allies, underlining, how the military leadership and therefore the officer class will be called upon to make crucial and critical decisions on which will depend the effects not only on the opposing armies but also on the civilian population.

The Tortuous Road toward the Armistice

After about 21 years of the Fascist Regime and three years of war, the official proclamation of the Armistice on September 8, 1943, between Italy and the Allied Powers, represents one of the most significant and controversial dates in Italian history of the 20th century. Great enthusiasm spread suddenly throughout the Italian population, motivated by the hope of an imminent peace, but, with the same rapidity, the nation experienced the transition into one of the most struggling and arduous periods since the beginning of the Second World War. The Allied Forces and the new-born Italian leadership establishment soon recognized the unprecedented challenges and the consistent efforts required to rebuild this nation, which was completely devastated in its economy, institutions, and morale and plagued by internal division.

The literature on this matter is in some cases discordant or at least not entirely clear about the retrospective motivations and the reasons behind many crucial decisions

made, from time to time, by prominent Italian and Allied figures. Within this context, although recognizing the interesting nature of this subject, the examination of these causes goes beyond the topic of this study. Therefore, the aim of the following paragraphs is limited to providing an overview of the climate and the conditions in which Italians and Allied Powers had to operate in the reconstruction of the nation and the establishment of the ACC, later renamed the Allied Commission (AC).

However, even if the date of the Armistice represents a turning point in Italian modern history, radical changes had already started in the country several months earlier. In this sense, Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily that began on July 10, 1943, provided clear evidence of the people's unwillingness to continue to fight for the Italian Fascist Government and its German allies. In fact, despite Mussolini's propagandistic appeals to defend the national soil from invasion, after only four days of fighting, the *Comando Supremo* (Supreme Command) reported the capitulation of the naval bases of Syracuse and Augusta and the withdrawal of the *Napoli* and *Livorno* Mobile Divisions. Sicily was assumed, already lost.³ As a most relevant fact, the general attitude of the Sicilian population toward the arrival of Allied Forces was characterized by positive acceptance and jubilation.⁴ Not later than July 14, General Vittorio Ambrosio, Chief of the Italian *Comando Supremo*, expressed to Mussolini not only the opinion that Sicily was to be abandoned, but also that it was time to consider the terms for peace.⁵

³ Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1994), 211, 240.

⁴ Ibid., 252.

⁵ Ibid., 232, 261-263.

Concerned about the success of the Allied Powers in Sicily, Adolf Hitler and Mussolini met in Feltre on July 19 to discuss the way ahead. The only relevant decision arising from this meeting was at the military level, as the German delegation announced the intention to relocate two division from the Russian front to the Italian front. So, at the political level, the real perception of the problems remained completely different for the leadership of the two countries. On the one hand, Hitler explicitly attributed the complete responsibility for the situation to the Italians and requested a full and decisive commitment to stop the Allied advance. On the other hand, the opinion among the Italian delegation was to use this meeting to convince the German allies to let Italy out of war, but Mussolini refused to raise this point.⁶

However, Hitler already knew something of the the real state of affairs. Informed by intelligence reports about the high probability of an existing plot to overthrow the Fascist Regime and the possibility of surrendering to the Allies, the *Führer* had already directed the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* to review and update in more detail the Alarich Plan, calling for the military occupation of the Italian territory to restore the dictatorial regime. Successively designated Operation Achse (Axis), referring to the most general condition of an Italian surrender to the Allied Powers, the objective of this plan was the withdrawal of all German forces from the south and islands toward Rome and the following occupation of Italian territory and disarmament of any Italian forces not still

⁶ Edmin P. Hoyt, *Backwater War: The Allied Campaign in Italy, 1943-1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 42.

loyal to the Axis. The experienced Field Marshal Erwin Rommel would have led this operation as Commander of Army Group B.⁷

In a short sequence of events, on July 20 the Italian King, Vittorio Emanuele III, whose aim was to proceed with a gradual transition to a new government and not an immediate overthrow of the Fascist Regime, tried to persuade Mussolini to voluntarily resign from his role of Chief of the Government, but with no success.⁸ According to some sources, Mussolini informed the King about the German ability to provide significant support for the continuation of the war, but he nevertheless anticipated the possibility of breaking away from the alliance in September, once honorable conditions would have been set for this announcement.⁹

Subsequently, only four days later, the *Gran Consiglio del Fascismo* (Fascist Grand Council), the collegial organ of Mussolini's government, convened for the first time since 1939 to discuss the ongoing invasion of Italian territory. Silently plotting for several months, under the King's approval, to overthrow *Il Duce's* leadership, a vast majority of the members approved a motion requesting the restitution of executive power to the monarchy.¹⁰

⁷ Garland and Smyth, 241.

⁸ Hoyt, 43.

⁹ Luigi Villari, *The Liberation of Italy* (Appleton, WI: Nelson Publishing Company, 1959), 6.

¹⁰ Among the 28 members of the council, 19 votes were in support of the motion, 7 votes were against, one vote was neutral and one member decided not to vote.

On July 25, Mussolini visited the King to report about the recent events, not effectively realizing what was going on. Assuming that the approved motion did not require any action to be taken against his person, once again, the Fascist leader refused to resign from the role of Chief of the Government. As already planned, at the exit of the King's private residence, Villa Ada Savoia, *Il Duce* was arrested and imprisoned.¹¹ On the same day, Vittorio Emanuele III appointed Marshal Pietro Badoglio, a 72-year-old retired General, as the new head of the Italian Government and retained for himself the formal control of the Italian Armed Forces.¹² As a first act, Badoglio abolished all organs of the Fascist state, disbanded the Fascist Party, and announced a new election after the end of the war. At the same time, the new government confirmed the restriction on political activities and did not release the anti-Fascist political prisoners.¹³

Anglo-American leaders reacted to this unexpected news with great surprise. Meanwhile, in Germany, anger and the feeling of being betrayed by Italy soon replaced Hitler's initial incredulity of the confusing news. On the other hand, the Italians responded to the announcement with great enthusiasm, assuming as imminent the end of the Fascist Regime and the conclusion of the war. This spontaneous manifestation resulted in the destruction of the Fascist public emblems and assaults on institutional buildings associated with the fallen government. Nevertheless, during the same day,

¹¹ Villari, *The Liberation of Italy*, 12.

¹² Garland and Smyth, 281.

¹³ Philip Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini: Italy, the Italians, and the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 87-88.

Badoglio announced that the war would continue.¹⁴ The following 45 days from that date to September 8 would be characterized by frenetic actions and decisions without precedent since the beginning of the conflict.

In consideration of the recent relevant events, the Anglo-American Coalition started to act on two different lines: the drafting of the surrender conditions to impose on the Italians and the continuation of the military campaign on the Italian Peninsula.

Regarding the terms of the armistice, different opinions emerged among the principal actors on the conditions of the Italian surrender. General Dwight D. Eisenhower supported the idea of favorable conditions in order push the Italian Forces to surrender as soon as possible, avoiding any further fighting and taking significant benefits from the control of the peninsular infrastructures in the continuing prosecution of the war against Germany. Not along the same tolerant line, both U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill were resolute about imposing a surrender characterized by severely restrictive conditions and firm on the process of removing any personalities related to the Fascist Regime. However, many other divergent perspectives emerged. Churchill was oriented toward retaining the authority to the Italian Government, keeping in place the Savoia Royal family and eventually employing the Italian military forces against Germany. By contrast, Roosevelt considered fundamental, the establishment of an Allied Military Government (AMG), authorized to overrule the

¹⁴ Ibid., 86.

constabulary authorities and did not foresee any future employment of Italian Forces in a combat role.¹⁵

Given the complex nature of this situation, the Allies agreed to proceed with two separate armistices. The first one, designated as the “short-term” armistice, was exclusively focused on military aspects of the surrender and approved by Anglo-American leaders on July 30. The second one, including political, financial, and economic conditions, was defined as the “long-term” armistice. Even if at that time many points remained pending, waiting for the Italian surrender, it was soon agreed to implement these documents under the direction of a control commission on the authority of the U.S. and British governments through the Combined Chief of Staff (CCS) and General Eisenhower.¹⁶ Due to the radically different views among the participants, this document was not ready until September 27.¹⁷

As already anticipated, the fall of Mussolini and his replacement with Badoglio did not stop the Allied plan for the invasion of the Italian Peninsula, due to the opinion that a decisive battle could have forced the new Italian Government to surrender rapidly. Consequently, as a result of the assessment conducted by Allied CCS, on August 16, Eisenhower approved the execution of Operation Baytown, to be executed between September 1 and 4, with a move across the Strait of Messina towards the Apulia Region,

¹⁵ Garland and Smyth, 268-276.

¹⁶ Ibid., 277.

¹⁷ Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1986), 219.

and the execution of Operation Avalanche, starting on September 9, with an amphibious assault on Salerno and aimed at the conquest of the Naples area.¹⁸

On July 26, just one day after Mussolini's fall, overwhelmed by initial fury and desire for immediate revenge, Hitler directed the preparation of Operation Achse. On the same day, Rommel was recalled from the Balkans to take the command of Army Group B, and Hitler assigned personally a special mission to *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Otto Skorzeny to locate and liberate *Il Duce*, considered the only Italian leader loyal to the Nazi cause.¹⁹ Shortly, *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* started to redeploy several divisions from France and the Eastern Front to Italy, justifying these decisions with the need to increase the defense against any further Allied invasion on the peninsular territory. Nevertheless, at least for appearance, and faced with concerns raised by the German authorities about Mussolini and the future of the war, both Badoglio and General Ambrosio reassured the Allied representatives that no changes would occur in their commitments.²⁰

In reality, as previously discussed, the real intention of the Italian leadership was completely different, as both the King and Prime Minister Badoglio were optimistic and confident at being able to conclude the war with a favorable solution for the monarchy and the Italian population. All the efforts had to be directed at avoiding any further fighting, moving ahead with the plan to break the alliance with Germany, and then to sue

¹⁸ Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993), 246.

¹⁹ Garland and Smyth, 284.

²⁰ Hoyt, 49-50.

for peace with the Allied Forces, assuming the status of a neutral country. Therefore, on July 27, Vittorio Emanuele III approved Badoglio's plan to invite the *Führer* to Italy to announce the decision to withdraw from the war. When, on July 30, Hitler finally met the Italian military attaché, being extremely suspicious of the sudden removal of Mussolini, he refused the invitation to meet the King and proposed a conference of the foreign ministers and chiefs of staff to be held on August 6 to define the way ahead.²¹

At the same time, a dangerous scenario was starting to emerge regarding the military plan. Aware of the German mistrust and informed by intelligence sources about the risk of a German attempt to seize Badoglio's government and restore Mussolini's power, the *Comando Supremo*, recognizing a significantly increasing flow of German forces moving toward the Italian borders. Depending on the fact that railway traffic was extremely congested because of the dispatch of a division northward to reduce civilian turmoil, from July 27 to August 1, the Italian General Staff stopped the incoming units along the borders, but a diplomatic issue soon arose between the two allies. Once again, confirming the general desire to prevent any action that could have encouraged Italians to fight against Germans, Badoglio authorized the entrance of the German forces into Italy.²²

In consideration of the rapid deterioration of the relations with the Germans and moreover, pressed by the growing threat of a military occupation of Italian soil, representatives of the diplomatic and military world began to seek contacts with delegates

²¹ Garland and Smyth, 287.

²² Ibid., 291-292.

of the Allied Powers to discuss the terms of a possible surrender. A first emissary was sent to Lisbon, Portugal, on August 3 and a second one to Tangier, Morocco, on August 5.²³ However, the most significant attempt at an agreement took place by sending General Giuseppe Castellano, a trusted member of the *Comando Supremo*, to Madrid and then to Lisbon from August 12 to 25. Unable to understand the absence of any power to negotiate and therefore still confident in the possibility to reach an agreement on the “Darlan model,”²⁴ Badoglio directed all diplomatic missions to focus on two main objectives. The first one was to inform the Allies that the Italian Government was unable to break away from the Axis because of the increasing Nazi threat and consequently, not in a position to stop fighting the Allied Powers even if willing to do so. The second objective was an explicit request for military support on the Italian mainland “as soon as possible and as far as possible at the north of Rome.”²⁵

The unwavering Allied position diverged from Italy’s perspective: the unconditional and immediate surrender was the only available option. On August 19, the Anglo-American delegation officially presented to General Castellano the short-term armistice conditions, and as part of the discussion, they anticipated the intention to establish a military government, even if no defined details were provided about the future

²³ Ibid., 288-289.

²⁴ Admiral Jean-François Darlan was the Vichy regime’s commander in French North Africa who negotiated the end of French opposition after the Allied landing, gaining a very favorable agreement that confirmed him as leader without the application of any substantial sanction.

²⁵ Morgan, 88-89.

of Italian institutions.²⁶ As a most relevant point of friction, the Allied representatives stressed the condition that a public announcement of the armistice had to be made by General Eisenhower and the Italian Prime Minister a few hours prior to the beginning of the Allied armies landing on Italian territory.

Returning to Rome, General Castellano reported to General Ambrosio and Marshall Badoglio about the strict and inflexible Allied terms of the armistice. As expected, the most significant Italian concern was represented by the imposed public announcement of the armistice prior to an effective and substantial Allied military presence on the peninsula. What was more frightful to the King and his staff was the high risk of an immediate German reprisal, given the Italian incapacity to prepare in a timely manner for an adequate military defense.

Pressed by the running time and the increasing German presence, on August 30, General Castellano, authorized by Badoglio, communicated the intention to sign the armistice but included in the message some requests for amendment. Once again, the Italian staff asked for a robust Allied presence in defense of Rome and the Italian territory before publicizing the surrender.²⁷ On September 3, after the latest attempts to change the armistice in a most advantageous manner for the Italian Government but with no success, General Castellano, for Marshal Badoglio, signed the short-term armistice in Cassibile, Sicily. As part of the imposed conditions, the document would “not be made public without prior approval of the Allied Commander-in-Chief.” During the same time,

²⁶ Garland and Smyth, 445.

²⁷ Ibid., 466.

the Eighth Army, led by General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, crossed the Strait of Messina as part of the planned execution of Operation Baytown.²⁸

On September 7, at the official communication of the imminent public release of news of the Italian surrender, the Italian Government and the *Comando Supremo* were virtually unprepared. Unable to make any resolute decisions and extremely concerned about the German reaction, once again Badoglio and his staff requested the Allies to postpone the armistice announcement. Following the resounding and steadfast refusal, at 1830 on September 8, as planned, General Eisenhower broadcast the news of the Italian unconditional surrender on Radio Algiers. At 1945 hours of the same day, but with about one hour of delay from the established time, Marshall Badoglio released the following message to the Italian Nation:

The Italian government, acknowledging the impossibility of continuing the unequal struggle against the overwhelming power of our opponents, and with the aim of sparing the nation further and more serious harm, has requested an armistice from General Eisenhower, commander-in-chief of the Anglo-American forces. This request has been met. Consequently, all hostilities against Anglo-American forces by Italian force, everywhere, must stop. Italian forces, however, will resist any eventual attacks coming from any other source.²⁹

In the hours immediately following, King Vittorio Emanuele III, Badoglio, General Ambrosio, and other members of the Italian Government and *Comando Supremo* left Rome, heading to Brindisi, without any further guidance and thus abandoning a nation and its Armed Forces to their fate.³⁰

²⁸ Matloff, 246.

²⁹ Morgan, 93.

³⁰ Ibid., 90.

CHAPTER 2

THE ITALIAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE ORIGINS OF THE EWR PROBLEM

Modern war brings with it modern weapons of defence and attack. One of the weapons of defence has been the mine. The enemy, since his retreat . . . has made full use of this weapon and has laid down many thousands from El Alamein, through Sicily and Italy, up to his present positions.

— Major J. S. Reakes, Civil Affair Section General Report on
Mine clearance in Italy, dated 7 April 1945

The Role of the Military Government and the Allied Control Commission

The following pages may raise some concerns in the reader waiting for information and details about minefields and ordnance, which will not be found at this initial stage. As a foreword to soften this consideration, it is relevant to clarify that, an overall analysis of the complex government structure, in place in Italy during the examined period, is essential for a complete understanding of the difficult context, where discussions and solutions about the problem of the removal of the minefields and other ERW originated and developed among multiple and sometimes contrasting actors.

Since 1942, with the increasing commitment in the European Theater and the gaining of the first successes, the Allied Powers recognized the relevant burden of establishing military governments in territories captured from the Axis. Great Britain never reported great issues with this, relying on their extensive expertise gained in fashioning colonial policy for well over a hundred years, so that the administration of Libya and Italian East Africa was effectively already ongoing without any significant concern. The situation was completely different with the U.S., where the Army's

background in civil affairs was extremely limited, and the School of Military Government had just been established in Charlottesville, Virginia, in May of the same year.³¹

Within this context, the Italian Campaign, starting with the occupation of Sicily, is considered the first significant military governance experience of the Second World War, and an indication of the nature and size of the problems that the Allies (particularly the Americans) had to face.³² At a national level, the analysis of these aspects began well in advance of the invasion of Italy and provided three important outcomes. The first significant result was the approval of a directive concerning the guidelines for the constitution of the AMGOT that, by May 1, 1943, provided the basis for developing a generic structure and organization to then be tailored to each country.³³ The second outcome was the decision to overcome the strictly national interests and the concept of territorial sectors adopted in the occupied German territories at the end of the First World War. Therefore, Anglo-American organizations would fall under the AMGOT umbrella, sharing key positions and responsibilities in equal parts.³⁴ The last but not least relevant decision, motivated by the negative results of the joint civil-military experience in North Africa, was to have the AMGOT exclusively manned by military personnel, with no

³¹ Headquarters 15th Army Group, G-3 Section, *A Military Encyclopedia Based on Operations in the Italian Campaigns, 1943-1945* (Italy: Allied Forces, n.d.), 535.

³² As the Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) was first set up, it included a Civil Affairs Section (CAS), which later became the Military Government Section (MGS) and finally the G-5 Section of the Supreme Allied HQ.

³³ Coles and Weinberg, 181-183.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

involvement of civil entities, at least during the initial phases. The priority was on the military nature of the operations.³⁵

At the operational and tactical level, starting from D-Day of Operation Husky, teams of Civil Affairs officers began operating in close coordination with the first-line combat units as part of the 15th Army Group, known as Force 141, led by General Harold Alexander. The Sicilian population generally welcomed the Allied soldiers, but quite soon problems started to emerge because of the lack of any essential services and the absence of any institutional representatives because most of these had disappeared with the capitulation of the Fascist Party.³⁶ However, this was just the beginning of a most challenging scenario.

Following the Italian surrender, the Allied Powers imposed, as part of the long-term armistice³⁷ signed in Malta on September 29, 1943, the institution of the ACC was assigned to perform three specific functions:

(1) to enforce and execute the instrument of surrender under your [Allied Commander-in-Chief] orders and general directives, (2) to insure that the conduct of the Italian Government conforms to the requirement of an Allied Base of Operations, especially transportation and communications, (3) to be the organ through which the policy of the United Nations towards the Italian Government is conducted and the relations of the United Nations with the Italian Government are handled.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Allied Commission, *A Review of Allied Military Government and of the Allied Commission in Italy: July 10, 1943, D-day, Sicily, to May 2, 1945, German Surrender in Italy* (Rome: U.S. Army, Public Relations Branch, [1945?]), 8-11.

³⁷ ACC was established under the legal basis provided by Article 37 of the “long-term” armistice.

³⁸ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), *Allied Commission, Higher Organization*, accessed

This new organization was the result of Eisenhower's proposal, approved by the CCS, to have the Italians assume the task of administering the nation under Allied control and consequently, take advantage of being relieved of the burden of an Anglo-American Military Government throughout Italy.³⁹ Nevertheless, a more complicated situation soon revealed itself to the Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ). The hopes of easily occupying the Italian mainland quickly faded under the reality of stubborn German opposition, and by that time many relevant concerns emerged around the Italian Campaign. Italian King Vittorio Emanuele III was hesitant to declare war on Germany and doubtful about the status of "co-belligerent," Badoglio championed the idea to take control of the Italian territories, only once the new government moved to Rome, there was no clear understanding of how best to balance the power between the existing AMGOT and the newly established ACC.

Faced with these problems, after the initial struggles, the general policy defined by the AFHQ for the administration of the Italian territories was to proceed with a gradual transition from military control to a more focused bureaucratic control, to be executed in three main steps. During the first phase, regarding the combat zone, the administrative functions were under the direct military control of the fighting forces and performed by AMG mobile teams. The second phase, stabilization in the rear areas, aimed to give all possible help immediately to the population, performed by "permanent"

January 13, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/100/000336/8BIT/10000_100_000336.djvu, 18,

³⁹ Robert W. Komer, "The Establishment of Allied Control in Italy," *Military Affairs* (Spring 1949): 20-21, accessed November 11, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1982645>.

military governments, named AMG Regions, operating under Army commanders and the technical supervision of ACC centralized headquarters. Finally, the third phase was focused on preparing for the restoration of Italian sovereignty in such territory and the actual turnover thereof, under the overall control exercised by the ACC through liaison officers.⁴⁰ During this last phase, the transferred regions would acquire the status of “non-occupied” territory where the Allies would only have the “right of passage,” and Italy would bear the cost of maintenance during the transits of their troops, as part of occupation costs. However, the real terms of the agreement, were secret so as not to discredit the Italian Government, included more significant conditions such as the reoccupation of any territory in case of disorder, and the use of ports, airfields, and any other infrastructure or area deemed vital for military purposes.⁴¹

Considering the terms defined by the above overall procedure, the evolution of the military government of the Italian territories can be divided to five different periods: (1) the Sicilian invasion, (2) the Palermo-Brindisi phase, (3) the Naples-Salerno period, (4) the Roman phase, and (5) the liberation of Northern Italy.

The Sicilian invasion represented the beginning of the military government experience. At that time, the AMGOT was first planned and consequently operating as a unique centralized structure. It is noteworthy that the initial scope of this organization was to facilitate the military operation in an enemy country, providing security to the

⁴⁰ Allied Commission, 5-6.

⁴¹ Robert W. Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater* (Washington, DC: Department of The Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1950), V-10 – V-11.

Allied Forces and their lines of communication. The welfare of the Italian population and the management of local institutions were only subordinate to those tasks.⁴²

Several political and strategic events shaped the Palermo-Brindisi phase. The signing of the two armistices, the declaration of war on Germany (eventually released on October 13, 1943), and the establishment of the ACC, under the AFHQ, are the most important events characterizing this period. Just after the arrival in Brindisi of Vittorio Emanuele III and Badoglio, an Allied Military Mission, led by Lieutenant General Sir Noel Mason MacFarlane, was organized in military, naval, air, and communication sections and dispatched early into the city. Following that, Badoglio's government was almost totally dependent on Allied logistic support, but effective sovereignty on the Italian territory was limited to the Apulia Region (Bari, Brindisi, Lecce, Taranto) and in a limited form, to Sardinia.

On the Allied side, a series of reforms would be executed to better support the overall objectives of the Italian Campaign. The first relevant initiative, effective from October 21st, was to divide the elements operating under the AMGOT into AMG 15th Army Group, responsible for administering the advanced combat zone and the static AMG Headquarters, at that time, based in Palermo. Strongly supported by Eisenhower, this decision was essential to providing the correct synchronization and integration of civil affairs activities and military necessities. In reality, several problems would emerge during the following months due to the fact that the 15th Army Group, responsible for the

⁴² Allied Commission, 8.

AMG mobile teams, was in Bari and therefore too far from the front line to provide an adequate level of supervision.⁴³

Later, on October 24th, the governmental overarching structure was renamed from AMGOT to AMG⁴⁴ and as part of this reform, the following initial AMG Regions⁴⁵ were created: Region I (Sicily), Region II (Calabria, Lucania, and in the advisory sense, Apulia), and Region III (Campania).⁴⁶ As a last significant reorganization, on November 10th, ACC HQ was officially activated in Brindisi. Subsequently, the Allied Military Mission was disbanded and its functions embedded in this new organization. In consideration of the broad spectrum of subjects under its purview, the ACC became a very articulated organization composed of four primary sections (Military, Political, Economic and Administrative, and Communications), each with multiple sub-commissions with different roles and responsibilities.

⁴³ Coles and Weinberg, 261.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 415.

⁴⁵ Each Region was chaired by a Regional Civil Affairs Officer.

⁴⁶ The Puglia Region was exempt from AMG control.

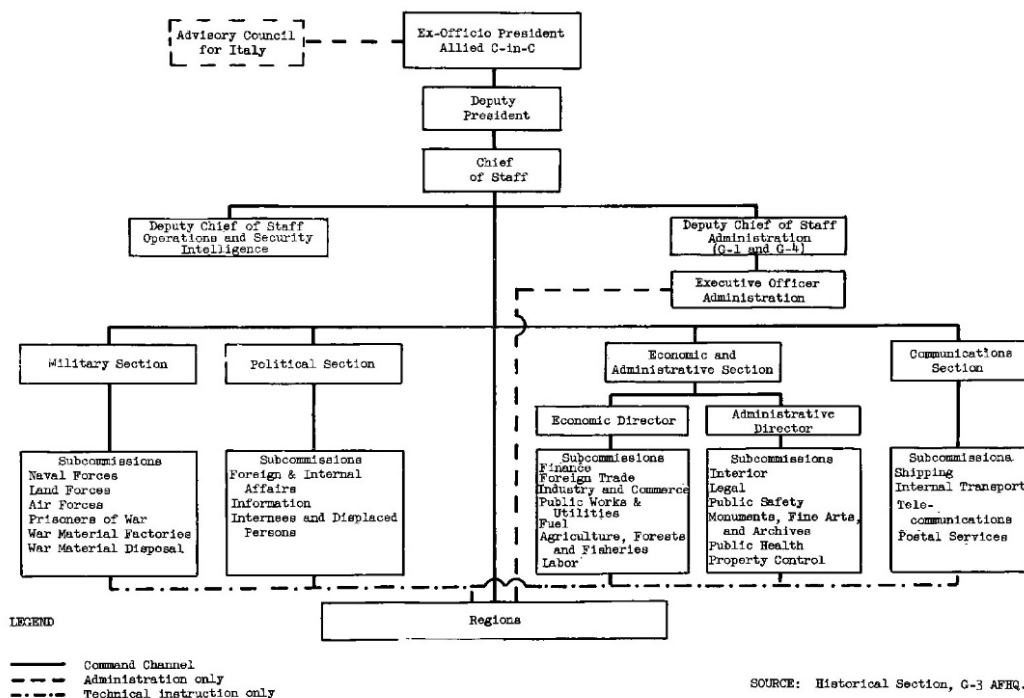


Figure 1. Organization of the ACC in Italy–November 10, 1943

Source: Robert W. Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater* (Washington, DC: Department of The Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1950), IV-21.

Other significant reforms would characterize the Allied governance system during the Naples-Salerno period. Subsequent to the slow but increasing military gains, by the end of December, the Allies approved the idea to relocate the northern part of their headquarters and the Italian provisional institutions, and to proceed with the first transfer of territory to the Italian Government. The reasons behind these decisions were both military and political. From a military perspective, the Allies needed to have their command closer to the front line and at the same time, to relocate the AMG personnel and resources in the newly established occupied territories where military administrative control was a compelling necessity. On the other hand, the first transfer of territory to be

under Italian sovereignty would support Badoglio's weak government that was suffering from an intense offensive propaganda campaign from Mussolini's RSI established in the German-controlled territories at Salò. Also, to complicate the Italian political scenario, there was the resolute opposition of the anti-Fascist parties, coalesced in the *Comitato Nazionale di Liberazione* (Committee of National Liberal Liberation). Headed by Ivanoe Bonomi, former Italian Prime Minister during the pre-Fascist period, it refused to provide any support to the existing government until Vittorio Emanuele III abdicated.⁴⁷

As a more practical effect, by the end of January 1944, General Alexander, in the multiple roles of 15th Army Group Commander⁴⁸, Military Governor, and Representative in Italy of the President of the ACC, disbanded the AMG HQ, with ACC HQ subsequently absorbing its responsibilities. In addition, the entire organization, including the rear detachment of Tizi Ouzou, Algeria, was relocated in Naples and Salerno, and the 5th and 8th Armies' AMGs were subordinated to the technical control of the ACC.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, V-4. Vittorio Emanuele III defied him, and only abdicated in 1946 in favor of his son, Umberto, who himself abdicated in 1946, bringing the Kingdom of Italy to an end.

⁴⁸ It is notable that, as General Alexander continued in the role of commanding general of the 15th Army Group, the designation of his unit was changed several times in a few months due to the reorganization of the forces in the European Theater: Allied Forces in Italy on January 11, Allied Central Mediterranean Forces on January 18, and Allied Armies in Italy on March 9.

⁴⁹ Coles and Weinberg, 251.

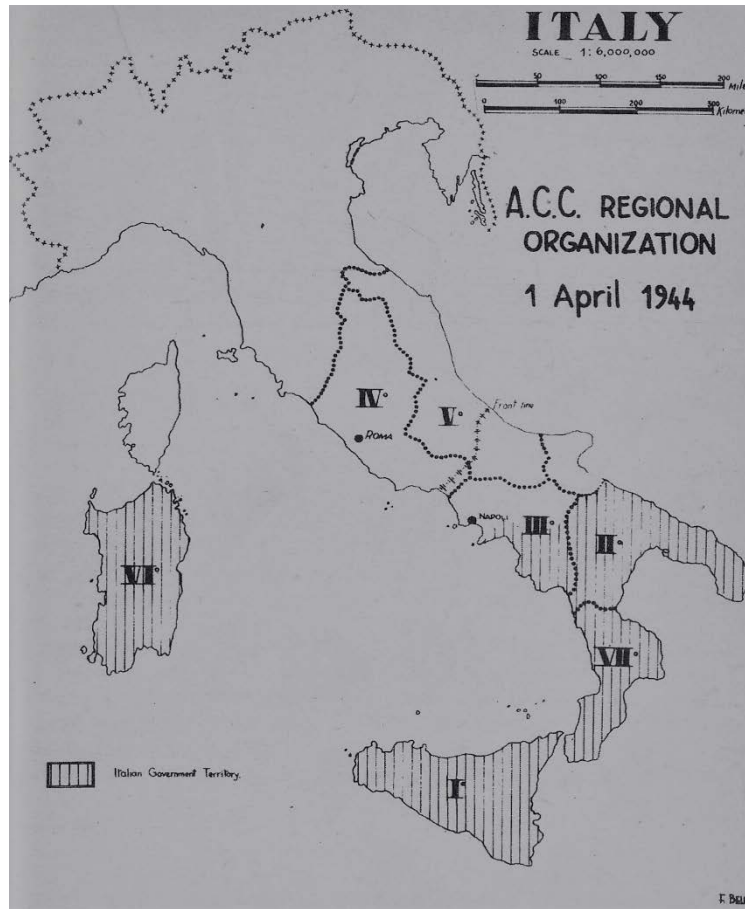


Figure 2. ACC Regional Organization–April 1, 1944

Source: Allied Commission, A Review of Allied Military Government and of the Allied Commission in Italy: July 10, 1943, D-day, Sicily, to May 2, 1945, German Surrender in Italy (Rome: U.S. Army, Public Relations Branch, [1945?]), 29.

On February 11, after the acceptance of the terms of transfer by Badoglio, Sicily, Sardinia, and the southern mainland below the Salerno-Bari line rear were formally returned to Italian control with the only exceptions being Lampedusa, Linosa, and Pantelleria islands, still needed for Allied Military purposes.⁵⁰ Starting from the same

⁵⁰ Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, V-18.

date, King Vittorio Emanuele III and the entire Italian Cabinet officially relocated to Salerno, even though this city, like Brindisi, never assumed the status of capital.

The last significant reform of this period focused on the reorganization of the ACC HQ. Several months of practical experience had indicated the necessity to revise the existing structure in order to supervise the Italian institutions in a more efficient way. The following significant modifications occurred: the Military and Communications Sections were abolished because they were considered unnecessary; the Economic and Administrative Section was divided into two different elements; the Prisoner of War and Displaced Persons Subcommissions were realigned to eliminate duplication of functions; and, finally, the four military subcommissions and the War Material Disposal Subcommission were made independent.⁵¹

⁵¹ Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, VII-24, VII-26.

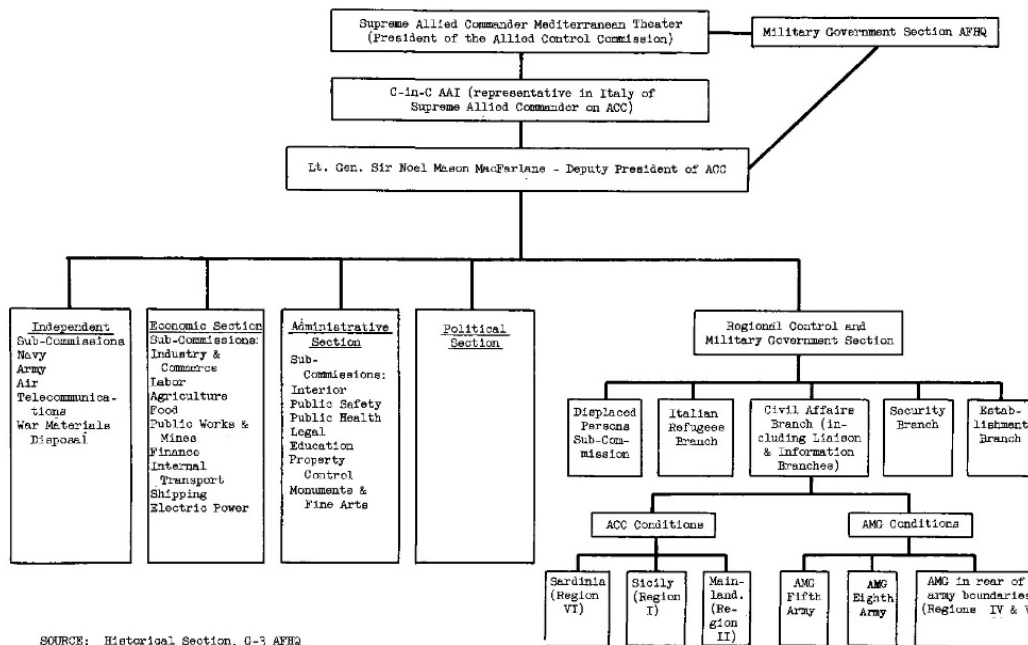


Figure 3. Organization of the ACC in Italy–February, 1944

Source: Robert W. Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater* (Washington, DC: Department of The Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1950), VII-25.

On June 4, 1944, the Allied Forces finally entered Rome, accomplishing a decisive step forward not only in the Italian Campaign but also toward the normalization of the Italian institutions. Following the course of actions agreed upon with the Allied representatives, Vittorio Emanuele III still refused to abdicate but transferred his powers to the Prince of Piedmont, Umberto II on June 5th. Badoglio resigned three days later in order to form a new government inclusive of all parties. Acknowledging the impossibility of proceeding further due to the resolute opposition of different factions, Badoglio retired to private life, handing over the role of Prime Minister to Ivanoe Bonomi. Under the

recommendation of the Supreme Allied Commander, the Italian Government eventually moved back to Rome on July 15, 1944.⁵²

From a military standpoint, the rapid withdrawal of the German forces along the Gothic Line, from Massa Carrara to Pesaro, allowed a swift advance of Allied troops to the north, significantly increasing the AMG's workload. By the end of June, the following new administrative districts were organized: AMG Rome Region (the city of Rome), under the direct control of ACC HQ; Region IV (Lazio, not including the city of Rome and Umbria); Region V (Abruzzi and Marche); and Region VIII (Tuscany).⁵³

Therefore, under the increasing pressure of Bonomi's new government and the urgent requirements to stabilize the combat zone recently occupied, different territories were restored under Italian sovereignty: Campania, except for the retention of the City of Naples, and Campobasso provinces on July 20; part of Region IV, including the city of Rome, on August 15; and part of Region V (Abruzzo and the provinces of Pescara and Chieti) and the remaining part of Region IV (Viterbo and Rieti provinces) on October 16.⁵⁴

⁵² Allied Commission, 41.

⁵³ Region VII was the compartment of Calabria detached from Region II on April 23, 1944, and Region VI was the Sardinia.

⁵⁴ Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, VIII-12.



Figure 4. ACC Regional Organization–September 1, 1944

Source: Allied Commission, A Review of Allied Military Government and of the Allied Commission in Italy: July 10, 1943, D-day, Sicily, to May 2, 1945, German Surrender in Italy (Rome: U.S. Army, Public Relations Branch, [1945?]), 63.

Three other significant reforms occurred in the administration of the Italian territories during this period. The first relevant decision was to relieve Field Marshal Harold Alexander of the burden of administering large rear areas no longer of operational interest. Therefore, beginning on September 8, 1944, AFHQ reassumed direct control

over the ACC.⁵⁵ The second relevant reform, effective October 1, was the reduction of the ACC HQ manpower by 25 percent, once the organization relocated in Rome with the Italian Government. As the only exception to this constraint policy, a Civil Affairs Section was created by the absorbing of the Administrative Section and the addition of the Patriot Branch, the Italian Refugee Branch, and the Internees and Displaced Persons Subcommittee. All personnel in surplus were reassigned to regional AMGs or field AMGs along the front lines.⁵⁶ The last change, more relevant for the political value than in substance, was the decision, enforced from October 25, 1944, to rename the Allied Control Commission (ACC) as the Allied Commission (AC) in recognition of the democratic progress executed by the Italian institutions.⁵⁷

On the way to the liberation of Northern Italy, a new sort of problem was presented to the Allied leadership, regarding the consistent presence of the Patriot (Partisan) organizations. Operating in efficient and organized structures, as nowhere else on the Italian territory, the Partisans were led by an underground political party, the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia* (Committee of National Liberation for Northern Italy), strongly leftist in orientation. It soon became evident that these groups could provide an immediate military advantage, but there was also the risk of supporting a potentially subversive movement that might later cause difficulties, not only for the Italian institutions but for the AMGs as well. Although different opinions emerged and a

⁵⁵ Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, VIII-14.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, VIII-19.

⁵⁷ Allied Commission, 60.

tripartite agreement was sought with no result, an official treaty was signed between the Supreme Allied Commander and the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia* on December 7, followed by a similar one signed between the same Partisan leadership and the Italian Government on December 26. The Patriot organizations accepted the most important conditions: responsibility to maintain law and order and to safeguard economic resources until AMGs were established but at the same time, agreed to obey all orders issued by Allied armies in Italy or Allied governments, including orders to disband or surrender. Nevertheless, many acts of personal revenge and summary justice occurred during this period.



Figure 5. AC Regional Organization–April 1, 1945

Source: Allied Commission, A Review of Allied Military Government and of the Allied Commission in Italy: July 10, 1943, D-day, Sicily, to May 2, 1945, German Surrender in Italy (Rome: U.S. Army, Public Relations Branch, [1945?]), 75.

After many months of heavy and often inconclusive fighting, 15th Army Group launched its final offensive, Operation Grapeshot, on April 9th, forcing the German forces in Italy to surrender unconditionally on May 2nd.⁵⁸ Following the usual process,

⁵⁸ Actually, the German High Commander signed the unconditional surrender to the Allies at 1415 hours on April 29, 1945 in Caserta. However, it was agreed that the document would take effects starting from noon (Greenwich time) on Wednesday, May 2, 1945.

the Allies organized AMGs at the tactical and then regional level.⁵⁹ In this context, the significant challenges presented by the administration of the most populated and industrialized Italian territories were partially mitigated by the still in operation essential services and infrastructures, protected and then managed by the Partisans during the withdrawal of Axis forces.

Starting from May 1945 and during the following months, other territories were gradually returned from AC to Italian Government control. Finally, on December 8, 1945, the CCS instructed that the city of Naples and all northern Italy, with the only exclusion of the disputed area of Venezia Giulia and Udine, should be transferred to the Italian Government.⁶⁰ By December 31, 1945, all AMGs were abolished and the territorial handovers completed; the AC was disbanded on January 31, 1947; and the residual functions were absorbed by AFHQ.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Allied Commission, 125.

⁶⁰ Sequence of return of central Italian territories: the Umbria and part of Tuscany and March, excluding the port of Ancona on May 10; Florence, Pisa, Leghorn, and Pistoia on June 19; compartment of Emilia and the provinces of Apuania and Lucca and the port of Ancona on August 4.

⁶¹ Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, XX-32.

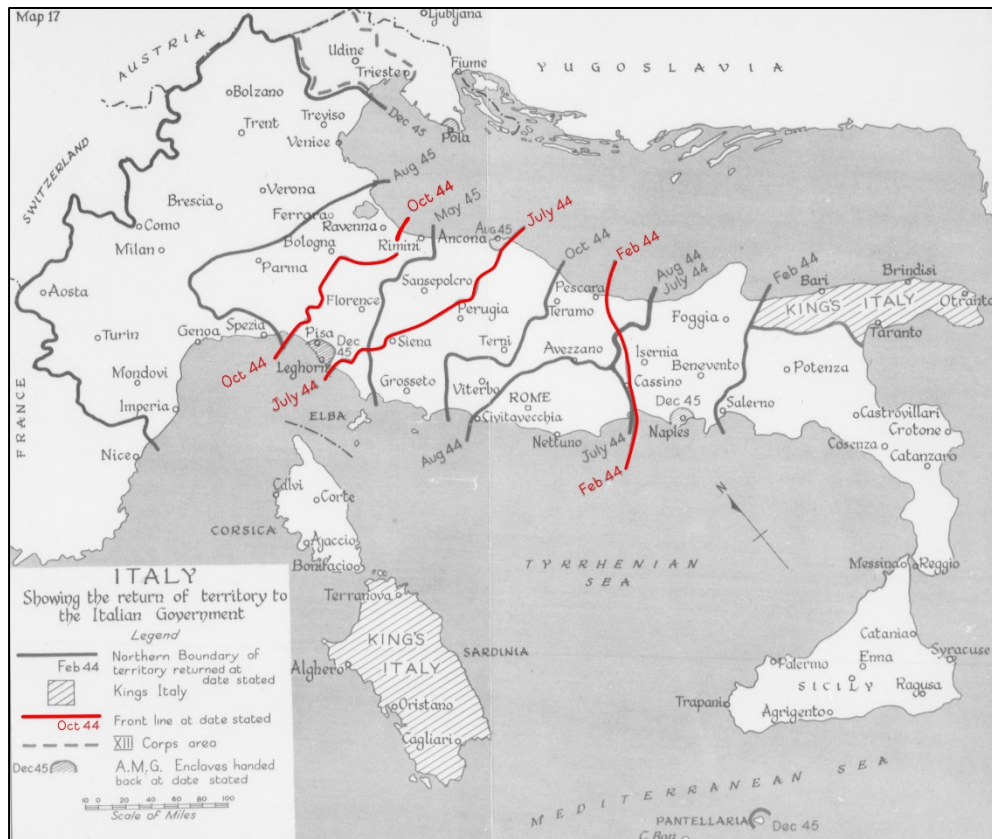


Figure 6. Status of the Front Line Advance and Territory Returned to the Italian Government by Date

Source: National Archives and Records Administration, Records of Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, World War II, Record Group 331, microfilm M1190, roll 1. Modified by author.

Nevertheless, the control of Allied Powers over the Italian Government continued to exist until September 15, 1947, when the Italian Peace Treaty, signed by the representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and France signed at Paris, on February 10, 1947, finally entered into force. The same document restored Udine province to Italy, divided the greater part of Venezia Giulia between Italy and Yugoslavia, and imposed the Free Territory of Trieste under the supervisory authority of the Security Council of the United Nations Organization. Two days later, on

September 17, 1947, AFHQ was abolished, and the combined command in the Mediterranean Theater disbanded.⁶²

In conclusion, it appears evident that AMGOT, ACC, and the Italian institutions played a critical role in the Italian reconstruction process and as part of it, they faced the problem of the removal of minefields and other ERW. Moreover, as emphasized by the Allied administrators in their lessons learned, with the advance of the war toward the north and the consolidation of the Italian Government, it became increasingly difficult to have the Italian population accept the strict Army AMG regulations in the area still under its control. Once the Italian authorities had received the territory back, not only was there no further AMG means to operate in that area, but also discrepancies emerged in the application of laws and regulations between the territories controlled by Italians and those controlled by the Allies.⁶³ Consequently, the substantial differences in objectives, role, and interests caused some points of friction among these three actors, an aspect more deeply analyzed in chapter 3.

The Origin of the Problem

The conflict reached the heart of Italian territory not long after the declaration of war on the Allied Powers. On June 11, 1940, only one day after Mussolini's decision to join Germany⁶⁴ in the fight against the United Kingdom and France, A.W. 38 bombers of

⁶² Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, XX-54 – XX-55.

⁶³ Headquarters 15th Army Group, 545.

⁶⁴ The official alliance, named Tripartite Pact, between Germany, Japan, and Italy was signed in Berlin on September 27, 1940.

the British Royal Air Force attacked the city of Turin, in northwest Italy.⁶⁵ This act imposed the initial pains of war on the Italian people and first raised the problem of unexploded ordnance. During the following weeks and months, other aerial attacks reached the Italian cities, but the situation drastically deteriorated by spring 1943, as a result of the intensification of the Allied military actions against Germany.

Exploiting the occupation of the North Africa territories in November 1942 and then conquering of the islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa in June 1943, the Allied Forces began an intensive bombing campaign on the Italian Peninsula, particularly in Sicily, in anticipation of Operation Husky.⁶⁶ Also, as a direct consequence of the possible Anglo-American advance, the Italian Forces started to improve the defensive measures along the southern seashore, laying minefields and creating passive obstacles to prevent a possible enemy landing. However, it is noteworthy that these measures never assumed a relevance like the complex Atlantic Wall structures built in the northern part of Europe, partly because of the lack of time and available resources but above all, as a result of the increasing unwillingness to fight spreading among the Italian Armed Forces.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the real turning point regarding the presence of minefields and ERW was the bloody fights to liberate the territory occupied by the Nazis and Mussolini's RSI. The

⁶⁵ Claudia Baldoli, "Spring 1943: The Fiat Strikes and the Collapse of the Italian Home Front," *History Workshop Journal* 72, no. 1 (Autumn 2011): 181, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41306844>.

⁶⁶ Matloff, 150.

⁶⁷ Alfred M. Beck et al., *The Corps of Engineers: The War against Germany* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1985), 127.

origin of the problem has three principal causes: the strategic bombing campaign, ground combat operations, and the employment of defensive minefields.

Even after the signing of the two armistices and the acceptance of Italy as a co-belligerent, the Allied Forces accelerated their strategic bombing effort in enemy-occupied territories, which reached its apogee in April 1945 with 43,679 tons of bombs dropped. The limited accuracy of bombing resulted in many civilians killed and provided the basis for the intense propaganda initiated by Mussolini against the Badoglio Government. Of these bombing activities, one of the most relevant happened from November 1944 to April 1945 on the Brenner Pass to interrupt the German supply lines and disrupt the industrial activities in Northern Italy and resulted in more than 15,000 tons of bombs released on this location.⁶⁸ As an additional relevant collateral consequence of the bombing campaign, despite the effort made to accurately identify the targets,⁶⁹ the Allied bombing caused the destruction or at least damage of several monuments and historic buildings, such as the Roman excavation of Pompei, theater La Scala in Milan, and the Renaissance Church of the Madonna dei Miracoli in Brescia. By the end of the war, 370,000 tons of bombs were dropped by Allies on Italian territory.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, "Rail operations over the Brenner Pass" (Washington, DC: Transportation Division, 1947), accessed January 20, 2017, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028758087;view=1up;seq=11>, 1. The total number of bombs includes the ordnance operations conducted on the Italian and Austrian side of the Brenner Pass.

⁶⁹ Exception is made for the deliberate decision to bomb the Monte Cassino Abbey on February 28, 1944. The legality, morality, and necessity of this event is still much debated.

⁷⁰ Bardoli, 181.

In addition to the immediate damage caused by these operations, there was the problem of unexploded ordnance. Assuming a value between 8 percent to 10 percent of fuse dud rates,⁷¹ about 29,600 to 37,000 tons of bombs lay unexploded on Italian territory.

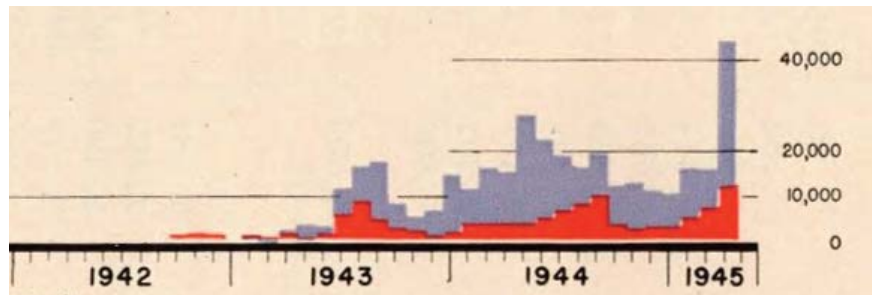


Figure 7. Bombs in Tons Dropped by U.S. Army Air Force (blue color) and British Royal Air Force (red color) on Italian Territory, 1942-1945

Source: The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, “Over-all Report (European War),” vol. 2c1 (Washington, DC: US Department of War, February 1947), 7.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Italian Campaign was characterized by intense combat operations. In the period from May 1, 1944 to July 31, 1944, the Allied Forces fought in the Anzio area and around Rome to take back the capital city. According to the data provided by only the 5th Army ordnance units, a total of 174,815 tons of ammunition were effectively expended during that timeframe.⁷² Similarly, moving

⁷¹ United States Defense Science Board Task Force on Unexploded Ordnance, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Unexploded Ordnance* (Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, 2003), 24.

⁷² United States Army, *Ammo Joe's Advance on Rome May 1, '44 – July 3, '44* (S.I.: Fifth Army, Ordnance, 1944), 3.

toward the north, just during the final advance of the Po Valley Campaign, from April 14, 1944 to May 2 1944, the Anglo-American forces spent an average of 997 tons of ordnance per day for only certain artillery weapons, resulting in a total of about 19,000 tons of ammunition expended.⁷³ Even assuming a very limited dud rate of 2 to 4 percent, in consideration of the fact that a relatively large quantity of this ammunition was small-caliber cartridges, the quantity of unexploded ordnance may be assumed as between 3,800 to 7,600 tons.

The last and most relevant aspect to examine is related to the firm resistance of German forces, resulting in delaying actions during the withdrawal to the north. Massive use of booby traps, minefields, and demolitions characterized these operations. In many cases, assuming the imminent risk of a possible Allied amphibious assault along the coasts, German engineers emplaced minefields and obstacles on their own initiative and without consultation with their nominal Italian allies. In the Salerno area, on September 8, 1943, the conflicting interests between Italians and Germans resulted in 16th Panzer Division taking control of the coastal defense, executing the protesting commander of an Italian division.⁷⁴

By 1938 the Germans had developed, as no one else in Europe, the most modern landmines and mine-warfare techniques. Minefields were integrated into the tactical operations and mathematically defined patterns were calculated to ensure a higher kill

⁷³ United States Army, Fifth Army Ordnance Operations Po Valley Campaign (Italy: 5th Army Ordnance Service, 1945), 6.

⁷⁴ Beck et al., 154.

ratio. The Allied units soon realized the significant hazard represented by these mortal means during their initial advance in Sicily:

Antipersonnel S-mines⁷⁵ were especially troublesome and were used in huge quantities. Whenever there was time, booby traps of every form, from ammunition dumps to attractive souvenirs, were prepared. It is reported in the British sector that an inviting cellar filled with whiskey and gin was so effectively booby-trapped that the entire building housing it had to be destroyed by engineers and bomb-disposal personnel.⁷⁶

In addition to the lethal threat posed by mines, the U.S. engineers had to face four additional issues that made their mine detectors ineffective. The first problem was the impossibility of using the instruments close to the front line, because the enemy often could hear the detector's hum, especially at night when the situation was relatively quiet. The second one was the introduction of new types of mines characterized by nonmetallic materials and delayed detonators, able to activate from one to 21 days later. The third element was the huge presence of many artifacts buried over time. The last factor resulted in a high natural metallic content of the soil, which produced in the instrument a hum indistinguishable from that caused by mines.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ The "S" mine (*Schrapnellmine*) was an anti-personnel mine, frequently laid in conjunction with "T" mines. When set off by being stepped on or by trip wires, its inner casing leaped from 3 to 5 feet into the air, scattering its charge of about 350 ball-bearings or scraps of steel in every direction and inflicting casualties up to a range of 200 yards.

⁷⁶ Allied Forces Headquarters, Training Memorandum n. 50, *Lessons from the Sicilian Campaign* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 1943), 54.

⁷⁷ Beck et al., 183.

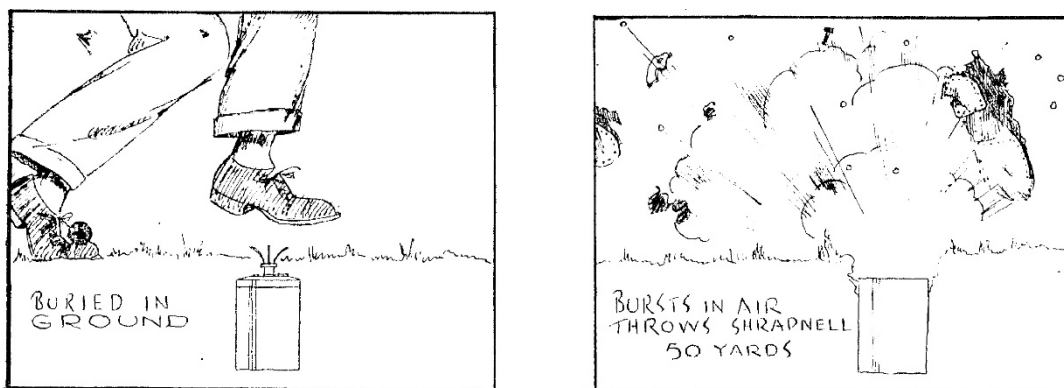


Figure 8. German S-mine in Action

Source: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Bomb and Mine disposal (Region I), 148-149, accessed March 26, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/124/000171/8BIT/10000_124_000171.djvu.

NOTE: Illustration prepared by the 343rd Regiment of Engineers, US Army on August 29, 1943 as part of a mine awareness campaign in Sicily.

As usual in war, adaptations and counter-adaptations began to play an incremental role in this field as well. For example, while the Allied engineers increased the use of bulldozers to breach mined areas in a safer and more rapid way,⁷⁸ the Germans recognized the ineffectiveness of some types of mines against this vehicle and began to lay minefields in areas not accessible to it. In this event, a solution implemented by the Allies was “to send sheep or goats into the minefield to hit tripwires and detonate the mines.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Notable is the decision to remove the roof to limit the risk of injuries to the neck or skulls to the operator.

⁷⁹ Beck et al., 183.

As the Allies advanced northward, each successive German fortified line had increasingly dense minefields, frequently laid without pattern or using confusing methods, distances, and depths. During the Po Valley Campaign, unfamiliar varieties of mines were introduced, notably the *Topfminen*. With its glass-enclosed chemical igniter and no metallic parts, this model of mine was impossible for metal detectors at that time to locate.

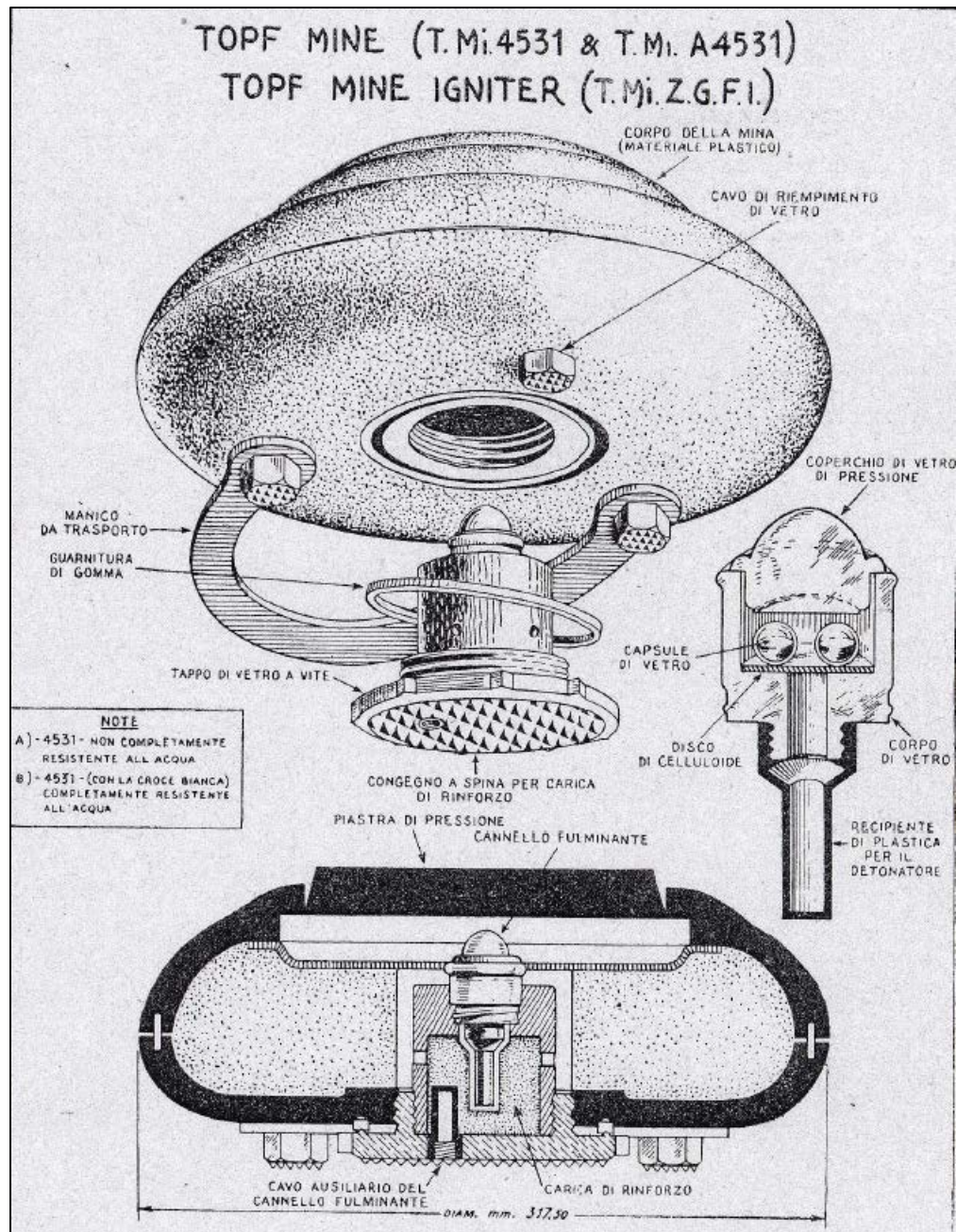


Figure 9. Illustration of Topf Mine

Source: Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Allied Commission, Instructions for removal of mine with descriptions of certain types of mines and igniters, Italy, May 1945, 19 (?).

NOTE: The pressure on the top surface causes the shear groove to collapse permitting the pressure plate to sit down on the igniter and actuate it by shearing the edge of the glass dome and crushing the phials.

The pace of the troops was generally too fast for the clearance activities to be performed by the engineers. As evidence, even when the policy was to clear extensive minefields only if strictly required for military reasons, the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion had to remove about 20,000 mines in the Formia-Gaeta area, north of Naples, suffering 15 deaths and 42 injuries during a period of 16 days.⁸⁰

Supporting engineer units, grouped under the Peninsular Base Section, maintained the responsibility to clear the areas, into which Allied troops moved, of mines and unexploded ordnance. This organization relied on British and American engineers, who got some help from attached Italian engineer troops and, at the end of the war, from volunteer Italian POWs.⁸¹ However, the clearance operations were strictly related to the military efforts. For example, when in March 1944, the ACC HQ, Region III, reported the presence of mines in a field in the vicinity of Caserta, to the 5th Army engineers, they refused to undertake any action because the area involved was considered not relevant for the military operation. On the other hand, they suggested employing personnel from “Italian sources as some of the minefields in question were laid by Italians.” However, when ACC Regional HQ requested the 5th Army to use an Italian Engineer Company attached to them, they replied that the Italian troops were “engaged in priority engineering projects” and that no units were available.⁸²

⁸⁰ Beck et al., 181-182.

⁸¹ Ibid., 246.

⁸² Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Disposal of Bombs, Mines, and Explosives, accessed January 21, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/143/000608/8BIT/10000_143_000608.djvu, 110.

In the most common cases, the front-line combat units limited their activities to fencing and marking the dangerous area. This is what occurred to the 8th Army Rear HQ on June 3, 1944, once it had advanced to Cassino. In fact, faced with the request for clearance activities to secure the area, the Peninsular Base Section communicated that no actions would take place and recommended extreme caution and the respect of the wired area, enclosing a sketch on the reverse side of the reply letter.⁸³

⁸³ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mined Area, in the Newly Occupied Territory, accessed January 20, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/101/000373/8BIT/10000_101_000373.djvu, 6.

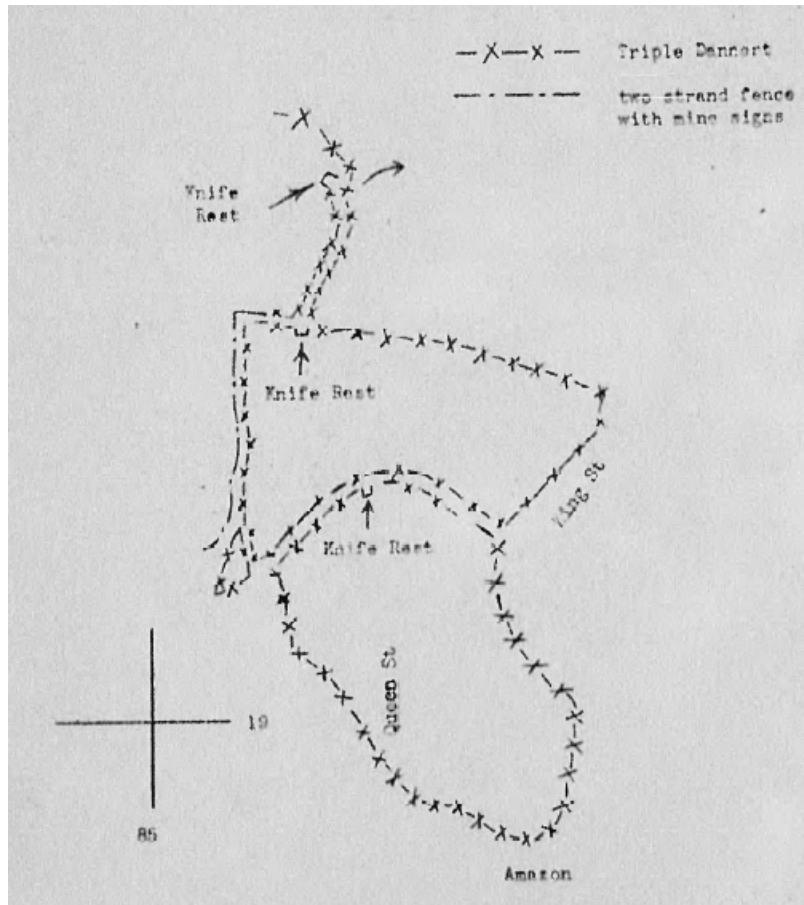


Figure 10. Mined Area Booby Trapped Area in Cassino and Vicinity

Source: Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), HQ Peninsular Base Section letter dated June 3, 1944, Mined Area, in the Newly Occupied Territory, accessed January 20, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/101/000373/8BIT/10000_101_000373.djvu, 7.

The Consequences on the Italian Territory

It is not easy to provide an exact assessment of the scope and nature of the direct and indirect damage resulting from the presence of minefields and other ERW. Nevertheless, some aspects are essential.

One of the most significant parameters that can be examined is represented by the number of the deaths caused by generic explosions of ordnance—not including aerial bombing or other types of bombing—during the period from June 10, 1940 to December 31, 1945, provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics. Of the 29,728 Italian victims, 28,280 (95 percent) occurred on the national territory and of them, 2,490 during the pre-armistice period and 25,790 during the post-armistice period.⁸⁴ Moreover, it must be taken into account that the Italian Armed Forces were significantly reduced after September 1943, a grand total of 26,489 civilians (94 percent) were victims of explosions of ordnance compared to the “only” 1,791 military personnel (6 percent).⁸⁵ Mines and ERW would have caused additional victims during the years following the end of the war, but unfortunately no official data on this particular point have been found by this author.

The cost in human lives is surely the most relevant factor but not the only one. Different reports released from the ACC sub-commissions highlighted the high hazards on the path to stabilizing the country, resulting from the presence of ERW and minefields. The restoration of water supplies, the rebuilding of electrical light and power

⁸⁴ As pre-armistice period is considered the timeframe from June 10, 1940 to September 8, 1943 meanwhile as post-armistice period is considered the timeframe from September 9, 1943 to December 31, 1945.

⁸⁵ Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, *Morti e Dispersi per Cause Belliche negli Anni 1940-45* (Rome: ISTAT, 1957), table 2-7 “Morti per causa e sesso” and 2-8 “Morti nel Territorio Nazionale, per Causa e Sesso,” 26, accessed January 21, 2017, https://ebiblio.istat.it/digibib/causedimorte/IST3413mortiedispersipercausebellicheanni1940_45+OCRottimizz.pdf.

lines, the reconstruction of roads and bridges, and the resumption of normal agricultural pursuits were jeopardized or delayed by this impelling threat.

In October 1945, the Italian Ministry of War provided an initial assessment of the consequences resulting from the presence of landmines and ERW, as part of the possible cost of reparation to be presented during the treaty of peace. The cited study considered the direct and indirect costs associated with the following parameters: execution of mine clearance operations; loss resulting from unproductive agricultural terrain; loss of human lives; loss in the production of livestock; and increased illnesses among the Italian population.⁸⁶ However, the report did not consider the cost associated with the disposal of ammunition.

⁸⁶ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Valutazione Sommaria dei danni derivanti da infestazione di mine nel territorio italiano, annex to paper n. 8/76728 dated 10 October 1945.



Figure 11. Mined Area in Italy Reported by the End of the War

Source: Pietro Billone, *La bonifica dei campi minati ed altri ordigni bellici in Italia dal 1944 al 1948* (Bologna, Italy: Tipostampa Bolognese, 1984), 26.

More in detail, it was assumed that about 250,000 hectares (about 965 square miles) were affected by mines or unexploded ordnance, resulting in an associated cost of clearance of about 18 billion Italian Lire, required to hire and equip about 10,000 to 12,000 civilian workers for two years.

The damage to agricultural production, associated with the same amount of surface, was calculated considering the 1943 agricultural annual revenue of five billion Lire for a three-year period and two additional billion Lire for the loss of “selected production” as vineyards and olive trees. The result added up to 17 billion Lire.

The loss of working force caused by the estimated victims of demining operations was appraised at 20,000 lives—including that already suffered—that, multiplied by a cost of 500,000 Lire per individual, resulted in an estimated expense of 10 billion Lire.⁸⁷

The cost associated with the inability to produce livestock was assumed to be two billion Lire considering both the casualties caused by the minefields during grazing in pastures and the inability to breed new cattle due to the extensive presence of these hazardous areas.

The final aspect was related to the foreseen increased level of illnesses, mainly malaria, during the period 1943 to 1947 because of the uncultivated terrain and the impossibility of conducting maintenance operations on creeks and irrigation channels. This damage was calculated as five billion Lire. Therefore, including an additional three

⁸⁷ It is to be underlined that this estimated cost does not include the financial impact on the health system as result of the mandatory assistance required for the injured operators and Italian civilians.

billion Lire for any further unplanned event, the estimated cost associated with the ERW and minefield problems resulted in a grand total of 55 billion Italian Lire.

Due to the very high level of inflation suffered by the Italian economy after 1943 and the necessity to consider articulated financial parameters, such as the real purchasing power, it appears difficult to determine the exact value of this amount today. However, some objective factors may help in providing a broad overview. Considering that the average income for a working-class family in June 1945 was 696 Lire per month, and that the Dollar per Lira real exchange rate was at one to 512.97,⁸⁸ and the Italian public debt in 1945 summed up to 850 billion Lire, it is possible to have a more accurate idea of the enormous economic resources assumed necessary to clear the Italian territory.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, using as an empiric value of revaluation the rate between the Italian public debt in 1945 and its most recent available official value, referred to the year 2015, it is possible to have an approximate parameter to adjust the estimated cost associated with the ERW and minefield problems in terms of actual economic value. Therefore, considering that, by the end of 2015, the Italian debt summed up to 2,171 billion Euro,⁹⁰ the increasing rate results to be about 4,945 times higher than the value in 1945.⁹¹

⁸⁸ In 1940, the real change Dollar per Lire was 1: 31.27.

⁸⁹ William D. Grampp, "The Italian Lira, 1938-45," *Journal of Political Economy* 54, no. 4 (August, 1946), accessed February 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.lumen.cgsccarl.com/stable/pdf/1827061.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Ansa, "February Public Debt Rises," accessed March 1, 2017, http://www.ansa.it/english/news/business/2016/04/15/february-public-debt-rises-2_e68840aa-95c0-4119-b7e2-93f79ee82494.html.

⁹¹ The official change rate Euro-Lire is 1 Euro = 1936,27 Lire. Therefore, 850 billion Lire are about 439 million Euro.

Consequently, the 55 billion Lire, corresponding to 28.40 million Euro, would assume a value of 140.438 billion Euro, about 152.894 billion U.S. Dollar at the exchange rate of December 31, 2015.⁹² Without a doubt, this would be a relevant cost for any national economy.

In conclusion, although the estimated costs and the amount of damage may appear generally vague, and the number of the predicted losses of life was indeed overestimated in the light of the effective numbers provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics, the dimension of the problem of the removal of landmines and other ERW certainly represented one of the most challenging activities for the Allied organizations and the Italian institutions.

⁹² 1 Euro = 1.0887 USD at the date of December 31, 2015. Source: European Central Bank Policy and Exchange Rates System, accessed March 7, 2017, https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-usd.en.html.

CHAPTER 3

THE ALLIES STRUGGLING FOR SOLUTIONS

The question of the removal of mines and the disposal of unexploded bombs and Italian ammunition is causing me some anxiety. In the neighborhood of IONIA many persons have lost their lives by walking on to minefields. The very difficult question then arises as to the recovery of the corpses. Shall lives be risked in bringing them back or shall the scandal and danger to health be faced by leaving them where they are?

— Lt. Col. Lord Gerald Wellesley, 7th Duke of Wellington,
SCAO Province of Catania, Memo dated 6 October 1943
to AMGOT H.Q. Palermo

Relying on *Carabinieri Reali* and Local Initiatives

The immediate actions for the removal of landmines and other ERW was evident and necessary to the Allies since the beginning of the Italian Campaign. Nevertheless, the contrast between the progression of the military operation and the necessity to stabilize the Italian territories already under the military government, create a substantial dilemma in defining the most adequate processes and in identifying the necessary resources for the solution of this problem.⁹³ In this context, the administration in Region I (Sicily) became the Allied test case for finding and developing solutions.

As already stated in the previous chapter, by that time, the Anglo-American policy on this subject was clearly defined in these terms: no Allied troops were to be committed to mine clearance and bomb disposal operations if not strictly related to their military efforts. Consequently, many Senior Civil Affair Officers (SCAOs) at provincial

⁹³ Italian National Archive, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Bomb and Mine disposal (Region I), 78.

level took the initiative and advanced proposals to remove mines or dispose of bombs.⁹⁴ On September 28, 1943, the SCAO Enna reported that Italian ex-soldiers were dealing with bombs in his area but also that they could not conduct mine clearance operations because they were missing an essential instrument. “Can you lend me a detector?” was the laconic conclusion of this three-line letter addressed to his higher command.⁹⁵ The SCAO Trapani, during the first days of October, requested the Public Safety Commission, AMGOT HQ, to contact the 7th Army HQ in order to identify the nearest unit capable of disposal of ordnance, since no communication had been received on this subject since the departure of the 3rd Infantry Division from that area.⁹⁶

In consideration of the significant presence of minefields laid by the Italian and German troops in his areas of responsibility, the SCAO Messina, on October 17, 1943, once informed about the impossibility of the British forces undertaking any action, requested the release of 15 Italian POWs from a camp close to Palermo, knowing that among them there were those who emplaced these same minefields. With a reply letter signed three days later, the Commissioner of Public Safety rejected this proposal, referring to the AMGOT Public Bulletin No. 8, para. 19 and suggesting that the best course would have been to get in touch with the *Carabinieri Reali* (CC.RR.) (Royal Carabinieri) Headquarters in Messina “who will be acquainted with the details of the

⁹⁴ At the date of September 3, 1943 9 provincial SCAOs were activated in the region (Palermo, Caltanissetta, Siracusa, Agrigento, Enna, Ragusa, Trapani, Catania, and Messina). Five led by U.S. Officers and four lead by British Officers.

⁹⁵ Italian National Archive, Bomb and Mine disposal (Region I), 91.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

scheme.”⁹⁷ However, the cited bulletin, released on October 13, did not provide any detailed instruction about the disposal of either mines or bombs, limiting any possible directions to the fact untrained personnel were not to perform any action and that arrangements for the disposal operations were being made by the Italian Carabinieri. In the end, the Commissioner of Public Safety’s suggestion was useless.⁹⁸

It is worth noting that an initial drafted version of this document was significantly different from the final one. With no reference to the role to be assumed by CC.RR., the proposed solution was to have squads of Italian military personnel or, if not available, civilian laborers conduct demining and bomb disposal, after initial training provided by American, British, or Italian instructors.⁹⁹ However, given the decision to not employ military units, by the middle of September, the Allies were leaning in the direction of having the clearance operations performed by ex-military personnel working under the guidance of the CC.RR. and overall supervision of the provincial SCAOs.¹⁰⁰

Following this strategy, on September 27, 1943, the AMGOT HQ Palermo requested General Ernesto Sannino, CC.RR. Commander in Sicily, to organize a bomb disposal service as soon as possible. Only one day later, the Italian officer replied with a letter having the ambiguous subject defined as the “removal, transportation and unloading

⁹⁷ Ibid., 52,54.

⁹⁸ Italian National Archive, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Public Safety Bulletins, September 1943–July 1944, accessed March 15, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/143/000372/8BIT/10000_143_000372.djvu, 138-139.

⁹⁹ Italian National Archive, Bomb and Mine disposal (Region I), 111-112.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 71, 115.

of explosive utensils.” This was most probably the result of a literal translation from Italian to English rather than a hypothetical attempt to camouflage the mine and bomb disposal activities. In this letter, Sannino identified an experienced Artillery Officer, Major La Barbera Gaetano, as able to lead this organization and make his proposal. The project organization consisted of three teams, each one composed of a senior noncommissioned officer (NCO), already designated, and nine other soldiers to be selected from the Italian 22nd Artillery Regiment detained in a Sicilian concentration camp. The letter further underlined the Allied responsibility for providing the necessary logistic support in its entirety. More in detail, that support would include three trucks, one car, the equipment, and explosives, as well.¹⁰¹

From the available documents, it is not possible to determine if this particular plan was ever implemented, but various facts support the idea that it was not. Two points, in particular, support this claim. First, one year after the arrival in Sicily, the SCAOs still lacked both Italian and Allied bomb disposal teams and were therefore struggling with the disposal of ERW and clearance of minefields. The second is that the Carabinieri leadership expressed concern whenever the possibility of disposal operations was suggested.

Since the enforcement of the short-term Armistice, the Allies had continued to rely on the Carabinieri to enforce law and order among the population, and by April 1944 about 25,000 Carabinieri were operating in the controlled territories.¹⁰² Reproducing the

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 61-65, 90.

¹⁰² Charles T. O'Reilly, *Forgotten Battles* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 135.

same structure in place in England and America, the AMGOT HQ decided to assign to the Carabinieri the role of conducting reconnaissance and reporting the unexploded bombs. In November 1943, this system was assessed as working properly, but the handling of ordnance was still being referred to the bomb disposal squad allocated by the 15th Army Group. By the same month, the Military Government Section of AFHQ had available two ordnance companies and another nine bomb disposal squads. Moreover there was an ongoing project, proposed by AFHQ, to disband the companies and create 24 more teams, for a total of 33 units, to assign to the Armies and Base Section and on request, to make available to support the AMG and ACC organization for technical assistance and disposal tasks. During the same weeks, and in coordination with the AMGOT HQ, the AFHQ was already planning where to deploy the bomb disposal teams throughout Italy. Twenty-five cities were considered most relevant and then ranked by importance with Rome, Milan, Genoa, Naples, and Turin respectively occupying the first five positions.¹⁰³ This surprising consideration might have reflected an optimistic hope to conclude the Italian Campaign shortly or might have been just a plan detailed well in advance due to the scarcity of resources.

However, continuing to deal with the same daily problems with mines and unexploded bombs and despite the above-mentioned project, on January 20, 1944, the AMG HQ Public Safety Officer requested a report about the status of the disposal squads located in the rear area and the quality of the reconnaissance tasks performed by the *Carabinieri Reali*. The results were as follows: The 8th Army reported a total of two

¹⁰³ Italian National Archive, Bomb and Mine disposal (Region I), 120-123.

squads operating. Meanwhile, the 5th Army replied that no squads were put at the AMG's disposal and that the only available teams were under the tactical units. In the same letter, the AMG 5th Army representative reported "unsuccessful attempts . . . to obtain Italian Bomb Disposal Squads" considering that in Naples there were several civilians qualified for this work. The Italian authorities were unwilling to have these operations performed by civilians in the Army areas and, likewise, to conscript them. In his conclusion, underlining the serious problem represented by the presence of mines, he reported that the Italians were unwilling to take on the work but, at the same time, unable to operate without the necessary provision of mine detecting equipment.¹⁰⁴

With reference to the CC.RR.'s role, both 5th Army and 8th Army reported the Carabinieri's performance as mediocre in the reconnaissance task, due to their limited or complete lack of training, but very useful in reporting the presence of ERW.¹⁰⁵ Consequentially, the disposal activities were performed by Allied bomb disposal squads.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, in February 1944, under the Allied authorities' proposal,¹⁰⁷ the possibility emerged to extend the Carabinieri's functions to include the mine clearance activities. However, this idea was rejected by the Public Safety Subcommittee of the

¹⁰⁴ Italian National Archive, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), UXB November 1943-January 1944, accessed March 10, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/143/000028/8BIT/10000_143_000028.djvu, 3-5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁶ Italian National Archive, Disposal of Bombs, Mines, and Explosives, 16.

¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, from the available documents there does not emerge any clear evidence about which organization actually proposed the implementation of that plan.

AC because “the strength does not allow the Corps to assume additional tasks” and because this work was not considered part of police duty. Only after insistence from the CC.RR. Commanding General, Lieutenant General Taddeo Orlando, who clarified that the idea was only to have a small number of Carabinieri able to act “in case of discovery of unexploded projectiles in localities far from the centers where mine clearance squads are operating,” were they authorized to participate in the demining course.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, when in December 1944, the Regional Public Safety Officer in Cremona Province proposed on his own initiative to train some Carabinieri in order to use them as instructors for the Partisans operating in demining activities, the Public Safety Subcommittee of the AC approved the proposal, underlining that CC.RR. units were not to be diverted from their specific duties and including, as additional concerns, the risks of possible problems with administrative matters such as insurance, compensation, and pensions.¹⁰⁹

However, with the increasing return of territory to the Italian Government, the Allies began to consider under which terms and to what extent it was possible to provide assistance in support of the mine clearance operations. Therefore, in August 1944, they held a preliminary internal conference. From the minutes of this meeting, two important arguments emerged. The first was that the blueprints of the Allied mine detectors were included in the Secret List and therefore, not releasable. At the same time, the Italian models were considered obsolete and useless because they were not designed for the

¹⁰⁸ Italian National Archive, Disposal of Bombs, Mines, and Explosives, 22-23.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 32, 35.

most modern mines nor adequate for the peninsular soil. Consequently, although the Italian industry was considered able to manufacture the most modern Allied instruments, the agreed position on this matter was to indicate “the location by prodding” as the initial method for the mine clearance operations.



Figure 12. An Italian Soldier using the Mine Detector Model “M”

Source: Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio (Italian Engineer Corps Historical Museum), Folder 241, Istruzione provvisoria per l'impiego del cercamine “M”, figura 4 – il cercamine in esplorazione.

NOTE: Mine detector “M,” named in this way as for the initial letter of his inventor, Lt. Col. Augusto Mirone, was the first Italian instrument of this type available in the Italian Army. It was developed for the use in North Africa Campaign, and distributed in 20 elements in October 1941.

The second argument concerned training. On this topic, the representative of the Allied Armies in Italy (AAI) defined a period from three to four weeks as the time necessary to qualify personnel as an instructor and 10 days as the minimum period to train the operators. Moreover, he considered it “very unlikely,” the possibility of conducting instruction in support of the Italians, because the AAI school was already extremely busy with Allied students. Finally, he added that a course for the Italian Army had just been concluded at the expense of a course for the AAI units. On the other hand, the representative of the Military Mission to the Italian Army (MMIA)¹¹⁰ reported that it was already committed to providing support to the Italians, considering that the companies of Italian engineers working with the AMG were training two additional companies. The position assumed at this point was to suggest that the Italian Government employ the Partisans as primary instructors and therefore, have the AAI providing assistance in training some of them, and the MMIA HQ asking the Italian Army to do the same.¹¹¹

However, to confirm that the actions undertaken by that time in the military occupied territories were so far from completely solving the problem of ERW and mine clearance, there is another interesting report. On September 1944, after several unsuccessful requests submitted by the mayor of S. Giovanni d’Asso, a small village at

¹¹⁰ The Military Mission to the Italian Army (MMIA) was a branch of the Land Forces Subcommittee in charge of maintaining liaison officers in 5th and 8th Armies to supply them with Italian troops.

¹¹¹ Italian National Archive, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), 80/pat. clearance of minefields, accessed March 12, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/125/000300/8BIT/10000_125_000300.djvu, 4-6.

about 44 km southeast of Siena, to the competent AMG authority, to receive a clearance team or at least, metal detectors to remove some mines emplaced by the Germans in retreat, the municipality decided to take advantage of two Partisans who offered themselves to remove the mines. Under the agreement of a 300 Lire per ordnance, the two men started the work but unfortunately, after having removed 75 mines in three days, the explosion of one mine killed both Partisans, leaving the problem unsolved.¹¹² It did not then represent a big surprise that, when Region VIII HQ (Tuscany) requested a directive and guidance concerning the removal of mines from that territory, the reply from the Public Safety Subcommittee of the AC was that there were none, adding that the Italian Government was training some special squads to be attached to each Region.¹¹³ In other terms, this was not significant progress from the reply received by the SCAO in Messina, about one year earlier; little had changed.

Nevertheless, by the end of 1944, the Allies undertook some important initiatives. Colonel Richard Russell Cripps, Director of the Local Government Subcommittee of the AC, informed the Italian Ministry of War about the Allied ability to hire some civilian firms to perform the mine clearance operations in the Lazio Region. However, it was the Provincial Safety Officer in the Firenze area who undertook one of the most interesting initiatives. After having identified two skilled Italian civilians as instructors, he organized a form of on-the-job training, qualifying about 90 mine removal operators between the end of October and the middle of November. In general, the plan consisted of the

¹¹² Italian National Archive, Disposal of Bombs, Mines, and Explosives, 55.

¹¹³ Ibid., 68-69.

qualification of five citizens per each village suffering from the minefield problem and then, to place them under the direct control of the mayor, who after having selected them to attend the course,¹¹⁴ assumed the role of director of the operations, under the supervision of the provincial officer and with the support of the instructors. The idea was quite original and apparently very effective.¹¹⁵

Afterward, with the progress of the Italian Campaign, the Allies gained additional military success, but a new problem began to emerge. This was the battlefield clearance and the disposal of the surplus ammunition in the territory south of the frontline, where the population increasingly was seeking a return to a more regular life but still under the constant threat of accidental explosions. The climax of this issue would be reached with the surrender of the Axis forces.

¹¹⁴ These men received a *cartolina-precetto* consisting in a formal order of mobilization.

¹¹⁵ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Comando AMG Provincia di Firenze, Quadri civili rastrellamento mine, dated November 20, 1944.

PUBLIC SAFETY 2873

Geheim 36A

Geheime Kommandosache

Fernschreibstelle Fernschreibname Laufende Nr.		Befördert: Datum: 19 um: Uhr an: durch: Relic:		E841 NS9/11 ACC DIST	
Angenommen Aufgenommen Datum: 12 AUG 1944 um: Uhr von: A.C.C. durch:		Bemerkte: ACTION Fernschreiben Posttelegramm Fernspruch			
Abgangsstelle Abgangszeit		ACTION: PUBLIC SAFETY SC(2) INFO: SECY GEN C.A. BR ADMIN SEC ARMY SC NAVY SC FILE 121 FLOAT			
Vermerke für Beförderung (vom Aufgeber ausfüllen)		Bestimmungsort			

FROM ACC REGION ONE
 TO ACC HQ for LUSH
 rptd ACC HQ Public
 Safety Sub Commission
 Ref No: RFO 266
 11 Aug.

PRIORITY

SECRET

regret to inform you explosion occurred. 081025
 VITTORIA during unloading old Italian
 munitions in siding about 20 killed
 30 injured 30 houses uninhabitable railway station
 permanent way and 40 rail cars damaged
 5,000 landmines 30 tons munitions blown
 all under control no repeat no sabotage suspected

Nicht zu übermitteln:
 Unterschrift des Aufgebers
 Fernsprech-Anschluß des Aufgebers

Lager-Nr. 1578. Verlag und Druck: Heß, Braunschweig-München. 3220. 40. 144000.

Figure 13. A Report about an Accidental Explosion that Occurred in Vittoria on August 11, 1944

Source: Italian National Archive, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Disposal of Bombs, Mines, and Explosives, accessed January 21, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/143/000608/8BIT/10000_143_000608.djvu, 80.

NOTE: Apart from the tragic event, the singularity of this document is in the use of a German format for message to report the fact. This was a confirmation that nothing is useless in war.

Disposal of Enemy Captured and Surplus Ammunition

By the end of the conflict, the problem of the battlefield clearance and disposal of surplus ammunition was as relevant as the presence of minefields. The military decision to spread the ordnance all over the Italian territory to prevent enemy air attacks was complicating the clearance operations, requiring once again, relevant coordination and resources among all the institutions. As an additional factor, the presence of objects of commercial value to sell on the black market, ranging from brass to wooden cases, led to continued theft from depots and during transport. Moreover, illegal fishing and other civil requirements fostered the theft of explosives and small arms ammunition as well.¹¹⁶ Consequently, the risk of accidental detonations was more than a mere possibility. On April 13, 1945, in San Vitaliano, a small village in the province of Naples, an explosion killed four, including a boy only 13 years old, and wounded two men intent on stealing from an ammunition storage site during the nighttime.¹¹⁷

In general, the criterion applied by the Allies was that the responsibility for managing and guarding the dumps rested on the owners of the ammunition, but, once again, the situation was incredibly complex. By the end of the war, not only American and British ordnance but also French, Greek, German, and the so-called “recaptured”

¹¹⁶ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Disposal of Ammunition January-April 1946, accessed March 8, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/109/000724/8BIT/10000_109_000724.djvu, 35.

¹¹⁷ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Ammunition Dumps November 1944-September 1946, accessed March 10, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/143/000826/8BIT/10000_143_000826.djvu, 28.

Italian materials were lying in a myriad of locations spread from the north to the south of the Italian Peninsula.¹¹⁸ Sometimes the ammunition and explosives present in a single spot were of mixed origins, and the identification of the owning nations was not immediately clear. Subsequently, this confusion caused a significant amount of bureaucracy and an extension of the time required to dispose of these materials.

Nevertheless, recognizing that the increasing instances of unauthorized access occurred mainly during the night, the Allies asked for additional support from the Italian local authorities, reminding them of the necessity to act and not only complain. This was important, since the Allies had limited ability to enforce the law in the territory already returned to Italian control. A significant example is the feeling of a British officer in analyzing the situation:

The local authorities have been assured that all ammunition . . . is stocked with full regard of all safety regulations and the population have been warned of the danger caused by pilfering such dumps.

At the same time it will, I am sure, be realized both that certain components are in short supply and also that the responsibility for avoiding explosion must primarily rest with the owner of the ammunition. . . . In the U.K. this would undoubtedly be the case and the fact that the standard of public morality in this country is different does not detract from that degree of responsibility. If the dumps are left unguarded, the control will be removed.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition February 1945-March 1946, accessed March 8, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/002076/8BIT/10000_120_002076.djvu, 15-17, 35-36.

¹¹⁹ Italian National Archives, Letter from the General N.W Hind-Smith, Office of the Executive Commissioner, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Disposal of Ammunition January-April 1946, 19.

Apart from the considerations concerning the Italian “standard of public morality,” in analyzing the problem, members of AC HQ confirmed that the guarding of the ammunition depots had to be considered a military task, assessing, moreover, that the employment of the entire force of Carabinieri would not have been able to stop this process.¹²⁰

At the same time, the recurrence of incidents involving ERW caused significant protests among the Italian population. For example, in Pola, two explosions that took place in December 1945 and January 1946 caused multiple casualties and damage to the city, as a result of which the citizens addressed a petition through the local bishop. This request was received by the Holy See and resulted in a letter sent to the U.S. representative in the Vatican, asking for both additional guards and to speed up the disposal process.¹²¹ Numerous other cases emerged where the feeling of peril among the people pushed the local administrators to seek recommendations in order to obtain priority in the removal of the ERW.¹²² Nevertheless, in some instances, the Italian Ministry of War offered its availability to relocate the Allied ammunition to reduce risks in some areas and to destroy American and British ammunition, pending the release of the necessary authorizations.¹²³

¹²⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹²¹ Ibid., 31.

¹²² Ibid., 17-18.

¹²³ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition February 1945-March 1946, 114.

As already described, this problem significantly affected the public order and decreased the Italian population's already limited sense of security. Furthermore, to make the situation worse, competition among the thieves stealing from the unguarded depots triggered conflicts among different gangs involved in this dangerous but lucrative activity. On the night of November 30, 1945, in Aversa, a small city about 20 km from Naples, a reported shooting between two clans stealing from the same depot caused the ignition of gelignite. As a consequence of the explosion, four civilians died, another 27 were injured, and the city suffered damage to buildings, estimated by the local authority at a cost of 120 million Lire.¹²⁴ Just a few days after this devastating incident, approximately 200 anonymous flyers were released in the city requesting an immediate removal of all the explosives and munitions stored in the entire Aversa area, under the threat of an impending popular revolt. In this case, as in other similar ones, the struggle to resolve the problem generated a "bureaucratic loop," with the Italian Prefects requesting the AC authorities to promptly secure the depots and the AC authorities reminding the Prefects about the necessity "to impress upon the Italian Police authorities to stop pilferage of ammunition and armed robbery."¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Using the revaluation rate defined in chapter 2, this amount would result today in 306 million Euro - 336 million Dollar.

¹²⁵ Italian National Archives, Ammunition Dumps November 1944-September 1946, 76-92.

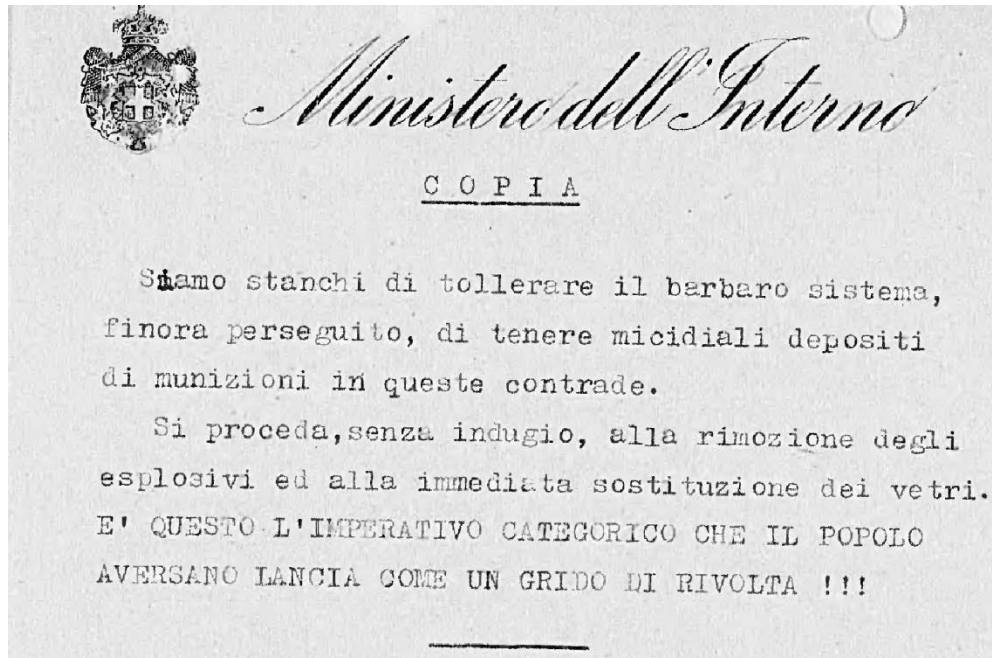


Figure 14. Flyer Released in Aversa

Source: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Ammunition Dumps November 1944-September 1946, accessed March 10, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/143/000826/8BIT/10000_143_000826.djvu, 86.

NOTE: The text of the flyer released in Aversa, as copied in a letter sent by the Italian Ministry of Interior to the AC Public Safety subcommission. Translation: “We are tired of tolerating this barbaric system, still pursued, of dumping lethal ammunition in these districts. We demand, without any further delay, the removal of all explosives and the immediate replacement of all window glasses. **THIS IS THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE THAT THE POPULACE OF AVERSA RAISES AS A CRY OF REVOLT !!!**”

In this context, the AFHQ letter AG 386.3, dated October 2, 1945, posed a milestone in the ERW removal process. This document provided the instructions for future operations specifying that “all enemy mines, grenades, detonators and initiators, explosives, small arms ammunition and ammunition of 20 mm caliber or below and surplus to known military requirements” were to be destroyed by dumping in the sea or a lake, or being exploded. Meanwhile, all enemy ammunition larger than 20 mm caliber

had to be broken down into its component parts by civilian firms in a way that did not allow any further employment for military ends.¹²⁶ Furthermore, an amendment released on February 3, 1946 shifted to the Italian Government the full responsibilities, from the custody to the disposal, for the Italian ammunition found on the national territory.

Ammunition located abroad would have been disposed of as captured enemy ordnance.¹²⁷

Consequently, among the decisions adopted by the Allies to solve this problem in the shortest time possible, two of them are of particular interest. The first one was to perform the battlefield salvage by hiring civilian firms. The second one was the execution of the so-called “dumping program,” consisting in the sinking of the surplus ammunition in deep water along the Italian coast. As described in the next paragraph, the involvement of the Italian institutions in the process did not prevent the rise of complaints and disputes with the Allied authorities.

Concerning the battlefield salvage, the U.S. Army signed contracts with some companies in geographically defined areas, providing them the authorization to collect and demilitarize abandoned American ammunition. The operations had to be conducted at their own expense, receiving as compensation the full ownership of the materials resulting from these activities. The U.S. Peninsular Base Section would retain the right to

¹²⁶ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition July-November 1946, accessed March 14, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/002078/8BIT/10000_120_002078.djvu, 17-19.

¹²⁷ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), AFHQ, Official Publications, Miscellaneous, accessed March 14, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/136/000040/8BIT/10000_136_000040.djvu, 112-113.

conduct inspections at any moment and with no announcement on the sites where these firms were operating.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, this process quite soon revealed its limits.

On February 11, 1946, the Italian Ministry of War released a letter to the Military Mission Italian Army (MMIA) reporting various issues about the activity performed by the contracted firms. The most relevant among the many were the following: only materials providing profit were actually removed and demilitarized with consequent uncertainty about the quality of the clearance; many individuals with no authorization were operating claiming that they had “Allied orders,” and their appropriation activities were not limited only to the U.S. abandoned materials but to everything with a value, resulting in a “license to loot,” the greatest part of these materials were resold on the black market with a loss of money for the Italian economy and industry; and finally, reports were highlighting the fact that there were no reductions in the cases of death due to explosives.¹²⁹

Therefore, following the Italian request, effective February 28, 1946, the U.S. Commander General for the Mediterranean Theater of Operations ordered the suspension of any agreement in place with those firms executing battlefield salvage. In the same letter, he directed the handing over of the responsibility for any future contract to the Italian War Ministry, through MMIA, or the Italian Ministry of Transportation. This

¹²⁸ Italian National Archives, Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition February 1945-March 1946, 57-58.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 50-56.

change in policy would provide to the Italian authorities the capability to enforce the national law without reference to the Allied Command.¹³⁰

The dumping program presented various difficulties as well. The procedure appeared simple: transport the surplus ammunition primarily by rail to a suitable port, embark them on schooners or other similar vessels, and then dump the load into the sea or a lake in water at least 50 fathoms—about 91 meters—deep.¹³¹ However, problems emerged in consideration of the large quantity of dangerous ordnance collected together and in relation to difficulties in adequately guarding these numerous convoys moving around the country while the number of Allied troops were reduced.

Exacerbating the feeling of danger among the Italian population, a devastating explosion occurred in Torre Annunziata, near Naples. This tragedy is well described by an official report released a few days afterward:

On the 21st of January [1946] an ammunition train containing American explosives en route for dumping in the sea was run into sidings at Torre Annunziata by the Italian state railway. There were 27 trucks, five of which were detached and removed to other sidings. In the evening of the same day [at about 6 p.m.], 16 of the remaining 22 trucks blew up.¹³²

By the end of this unfortunate event, there were three massive detonations, separated from each other by 30 to 40 minutes, that left 54 dead, more than 250 injured,

¹³⁰ Ibid., 44. Nevertheless, in the following months, one of the major firm involved in this business, Polverifici Giovanni Stracchini, complained to the Allies, justifying their partial clearance by the fact that were authorized to collect only American munitions, and accused the Italian institutions of taking away the scrap metal regularly collected under the terms of that contract.

¹³¹ Italian National Archives, Disposal of Ammunition January-April 1946, 43.

¹³² Ibid., 68. The document reported 22 bodies recovered and other 10-15 more people missing. Information as for today, confirms the dead of a total of 54 people.

and about 3,000 homeless.¹³³ The subsequent investigation highlighted as the probable cause of the explosion a fire caused by a flare, possibly a firework, accidentally dropped on the cover of one of the wagons.¹³⁴

This fact increased the Allied difficulties in obtaining the necessary authorizations from the Italian Government to use ports. A particular case resulted in a dispute at the highest level when the AFHQ requested to use the ports of Ancona, Molfetta, and Barletta as part of the dumping program. The director of the Italian Merchant Marine, on February 23, 1946, did not grant the permission, except for Barletta, because of the risk of explosion in densely populated areas. For about one month, AC representatives tried to obtain a review of this decision from the Italian institutions, but with no progress.¹³⁵ On March 26, 1946, the stalemate in the process forced the AC Chief Commissioner, Rear Admiral Ellery W. Stone, to address a letter to the Italian Prime Minister himself, explaining the relevance of the matter and requesting permission to utilize at least two ports as an alternative to the two previously refused. Also in this communication, the U.S. Admiral clearly stated that the denial would have resulted in no other alternative than to leave the ammunition in its present positions and consider it under the responsibility of the Italian Government.¹³⁶

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Italian National Archives, Ammunition Dumps November 1944-September 1946, 51.

¹³⁵ Italian National Archives, Disposal of Ammunition January-April 1946, 14-15.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 22.



Figure 15. Rear Admiral Ellery W. Stone and the Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi

Source: Riccardo Belli, website, accessed March 14, 2017, [http://www.riccardobellandi.it/lo-spettro-greco-personaggi-storici;La rivincita postuma delle idee di Dossetti](http://www.riccardobellandi.it/lo-spettro-greco-personaggi-storici;La-rivincita-postuma-delle-idee-di-Dossetti); Corriere della sera, accessed March 14, 2017, http://www.corriere.it/unita-italia-150/13_gennaio_08/mieli-rivincita-postuma-idee-dossetti_3a9c7130-599f-11e2-bf1c-a7535a9f5f63.shtml.

NOTE: On the left, Rear Admiral Ellery W. Stone was AC Chief Commissioner from June 22, 1944 to the disbanding of the structure, on January 31, 1947. On the right, the Italian Prime Minister, Alcide De Gasperi in office from December 10, 1945 to August 17, 1953.

The initial reply from the Italian Prime Minister confirmed the initial refusal and only considered the possible use of ports of minor importance. However, on April 5, the Italian Liaison Officer in the Chief Commissioner Office informed the Allies that the Italian Government had verbally approved the use of the port of Ancona and hoped to

shortly provide an answer on the port of Molfetta.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, concerns and fear remained in the local population.¹³⁸

In February 1944, the Prefect of Bari asked the Allied authorities to take action to remove the 94 railroad cars, loaded with ammunition of different calibers, sitting in the local station.¹³⁹ During the same month, in Naples, the Prefect, in the role of representative of the Italian Ministry of Interior, requested the Allied authorities to remove as soon as possible the 40 railroad cars parked in the Bagnoli area, a district of the city, due to the increasing concerns among the population.¹⁴⁰

Apart from the permission to use ports, other measures were negotiated between the Italian and Allied institutions about terms to execute the transport and the loading, and on these matters, different perspectives emerged. Especially after the disaster of Torre Annunziata, the Italians were focused on limiting the maximum amount of ammunition for each operation and the turnaround time prior to the embarkation. In contrast, the Allies were willing to transport higher quantities into well-equipped and connected ports in order to maintain a consistent speed in the execution of the dumping program. For example, after several meetings, in February 1946, the Italian and American

¹³⁷ Italian National Archives, Disposal of Ammunition January-April 1946, 14-15, 24.

¹³⁸ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Disposal of Ammunition April 1946-January 1947, accessed March 12, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/109/000725/8BIT/10000_109_000725.djvu, 56.

¹³⁹ Italian National Archives, Ammunition Dumps November 1944-September 1946, 44-49.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 69-71.

authorities operating in the Naples area agreed to limit the dumping operation to no more than 180 tons a day, to have the convoys waiting for no more than one night, and to use a guarding service provided by the U.S. Command at the port of embarkation and near the trucks halted during the nighttime.¹⁴¹ The challenging nature of this problem is illustrated by the fact that it resulted in the removal of only 43,000 tons of American ammunitions in the Aversa area. At that rate, it would have required—in the most optimistic view—about 240 working days to complete just that one task.¹⁴²

However, dumping into the sea was not the exclusive method employed to dispose of the surplus ammunition: part of it was shipped back to the country of origin. In other cases, the ordnance was handed over to the Italian Armed Forces, under the specific terms of agreement that usually included possible payment and the acceptance of full responsibility for custody. From the available documents, it is important to clarify that this ammunition was generally provided to be used as raw materials for other industry or at most, for the precautionary detonations necessary in battlefield clearance operations, but not for direct military purposes.¹⁴³

On the Italian side, since February 18, 1945, the AC Land Forces Subcommittee authorized the Ministry of War to sell its surplus explosive materials, pending the release of special authorization from the MMIA in the regions still under their control and simply

¹⁴¹ Italian National Archives, Disposal of Ammunition January-April 1946, 72, 57-58, 83, 88-87.

¹⁴² Italian National Archives, Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition February 1945-March 1946, 144.

¹⁴³ Italian National Archives, Disposal of Ammunition January-April 1946, 50-51, 72.

informing the other parts of the country. Toward the end of the conflict, these operations increased, as these materials were used in various ways for public utility works and industrial and agricultural purposes.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, whenever possible, surplus or badly damaged munitions were generally collected in caves or pits in isolated places and then destroyed. Nevertheless, the Italian authorities complained to the Allies because these detonations were causing great panic in the population, damaging buildings, and shattering glass windows. As a solution, they demanded to reduce the amount of material detonated per single explosion and to conduct these activities at some well-defined times. An additional relevant fact, emerging from the available documents, is that many of these activities, including the handling of the ERW, were performed by German POWs.¹⁴⁵

This consideration was further supported by the AFHQ letter “Disposition of Captured Enemy Material in Italy,” released on June 22, 1945. Among many other aspects, with reference to the disposal of ammunition, this document stated that German transport and personnel were to be used, under Allied supervision, for the collection of all materials still utilizable for the remaining efforts of the war, defined as category 3.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Italian National Archives, Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition February 1945-March 1946, 22-27, 239-241.

¹⁴⁵ Italian National Archives, Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition February 1945-March 1946, 142,150; Ammunition Dumps November 1944-September 1946, 93; Italian National Archives, Disposal of Ammunition January-April 1946, 36.

¹⁴⁶ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Conditions of Surrender, German Forces, and Post-Surrender Disposal and Treatment as PW March-October 1945, accessed March 14, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/136/000305/8BIT/10000_136_000305.djvu, 65-78.

Serial 1	<u>PISTOLS</u>
	9mm Pistols (Luger and Walther automatics)
	27mm Signal pistols (unrifled)
Serial 2	<u>RIFLES</u>
	7.92mm (bolt operated)
	7.92mm (gewehr 41 (W) and 41 (H) (self loading rifles)
	7.92mm Snipers rifle
Serial 3	<u>MACHINE GUNS</u>
	7.92mm L.M.G. 34
Serial 4	<u>AMMUNITION</u>
	All ammunition to fit weapons in Serial 1 - 3 above.
Serial 5	<u>BINOCULARS</u>
	All types
Serial 6	<u>TRACTORS</u>
	German Sd. Kfz 11 Zglow 3-ton (Zug Kraftwagen 3 t. Leichter)
	German Sd. Kfz 7 Zglow 8-ton (Zug Kraftwagen 8 t. mittlerer)
	German Sd. Kfz 9 Zglow 18-ton (Zug Kraftwagen 18 t. schwerer)
Serial 7	<u>GENERATORS</u>
	Generators Diesel Engine driven
	30 K.V., 220 and 240 volt.

Figure 16. List of Category 3 Material

Source: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Conditions of Surrender, German Forces, and Post-Surrender Disposal and Treatment as PW March-October 1945, accessed March 14, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/136/000305/8BIT/10000_136_000305.djvu, 67.

Moreover, this document authorized, if necessary, the constitution of technical units of German POWs to be employed for the destruction of dumps of German or Italian

munitions not exceeding 500 tons. Meanwhile, the dumps larger than that were to be guarded while waiting for further assessments on the most appropriate actions to take. Noteworthy, the remarks at the end of the ammunition paragraph state: “Nothing in these instructions is to be regarded in any way as restricting the authority of addressees to destroy ammunition in any quantity which is in a dangerous condition or constitutes a hazard to internal security, utilizing German personnel, under Allied supervision for the works.”¹⁴⁷

In the days immediately after the Axis surrendered in Italy, the 5th Army, assumed from May 13, 1945 the initial responsibility for the management of the enemy forces, estimated the presence of about 133,000 surrendered personnel, added to which were another 83,000 already existing POWs just in the Italian territory still under military control.¹⁴⁸ From that moment, various projects and ideas started to arise about how better to employ these personnel, and in this sense, the Italian Government began to consider the opportunity of using the German POWs as well.

The Scheme to Employ German POWs for Demining

During the days immediately after the Axis surrender, the Allies realized that the presence of the enemy surrendered personnel and POWs was a two-faced coin. On one hand, the setting up and management of camps was an incredible logistic effort in

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 65-78.

¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the 5th Army order defined the policy that the units still organized were to be considered as surrendered personnel. Meanwhile all the others, including the so called “recalcitrant units” (Waffen-SS and other special categories) were to be handled as POW.

consideration of the limited time available and the significant number of people to accommodate. On the other hand, the prisoners represented a relevant workforce, available at a relatively low cost, ready to be used, and with limited rights. Among the multiple projects aimed at taking advantage of this last aspect, on May 10, 1945, Brigadier General Gerald Ritchie Upjohn, Chief of the Civil Affairs Section of the AC, supporting the idea of the subordinate Local Government Subcommission, addressed the AFHQ G-5 with the proposal to make the German POWs available to the Italian Government for the mine clearance. An interesting aspect of this letter is that, while Upjohn was aware of the 15th Army Group directive that banned the employment of POWs for dangerous tasks, he advanced the proposal with the hypothetical assumption that “it may be that the surrender terms include a clause under which they may be used for the specific purpose of mine clearance.”¹⁴⁹

Three days later, the AFHQ G-5 section approved the overall plan, directed AC HQ to discuss the matter with the Italian Government, and broadened the project, reporting the willingness to turn over a portion of the German prisoners, in a number between 100,000 and 150,000, not only for mine clearance but also to assist in every field necessary for the rehabilitation of the country. However, the following terms of acceptance were directed:

- (a) The Germans would continue to be prisoners of the US/UK and so would be fed and maintained by the latter.
- (b) They would be administered in large concentration areas by US/UK and guarded by Italians.

¹⁴⁹ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance Scheme (use of surrendered personnel) Correspondence, accessed March 27, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000722/8BIT/10000_105_000722.djvu, 141.

- (c) They would be guarded on work projects by the Italians, who would have full supervision of such projects.
- (d) Materials, tools, etc. for their work would be furnished by the Italians.¹⁵⁰

Before proceeding further in the examination of this scheme, it is significant to report that, in April 1945, the AFHQ had already examined a similar proposal concerning the employment of the Italian Service Unit personnel in mine clearance and that various legal concerns had emerged. In detail, the U.S. Department of State, even if not opposing the idea, underlined the necessity to acquire a preventive approval from the Italian Government. Consequently, the mandatory requirements resulting from the above agreement where; that the units had to be voluntary for this work, paid in the same terms defined for the Italian Army, employed exclusively on Italian territory, and adequately trained. Likewise, the British Foreign Office underlined that the proposed employment was contrary to articles 31 and 32¹⁵¹ of the Geneva Convention, signed in July 1929, relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, which clearly stated that this category of personnel was not to be used for dangerous work.¹⁵² Nevertheless, the United Kingdom office included in its assessment, a possible exception under the condition that the

¹⁵⁰ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance Scheme (use of surrendered personnel) Correspondence, 139-140.

¹⁵¹ Art. 31. Work done by prisoners of war shall have no direct connection with the operations of the war. In particular, it is forbidden to employ prisoners in the manufacture or transport of arms or munitions of any kind, or on the transport of material destined for combatant units . . . Art. 32. It is forbidden to employ prisoners of war on unhealthy or dangerous work. Conditions of work shall not be rendered more arduous by disciplinary measures.

¹⁵² It is relevant to report that, by that time, the discussed Convention was ratified by Germany, Italy, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America but not by Japan.

operators were “prepared to waive their rights under these articles.”¹⁵³ While the examination of the legal validity of these questionable suggestions is not part of this study, it is relevant to underline that none of these standpoints emerged either from the Allied or the Italian side during the development of the plan of employment of the German POWs.

However, the existing contrast between the international laws and this scheme was known to at least some the Allied administrators, whose strong support of the idea of employing German POWs apparently was primarily motivated by ideological principles rather than legal assessments. At least this was the opinion that clearly emerges from a letter, with the subject “German land mines,” addressed by Captain Leigh J. Monson, AMG Provincial Officer in Imola, to the AC HQ on August 4, 1945, an extract of which is cited below:

1. It is intimated that in some fashion, the Geneva Convention is standing between the German land mines, and their removal by German prisoners of war. I wonder if there is anyone so naïve as to believe that had Germans been the victors, they would not have used Allied prisoners in mine removal? I suspect that their hesitancy would not have been noticeable. . . .
3. The world is about to undertake the chastening of the German nation, in an effort at bringing home to them the truth of the adage “Crime does not pay.” I submit that a very practical lesson in their re-education would be that of obliging their sons and husbands at their personal peril to undertake the removal of hundreds of thousands of murderous machines that their armies so earnestly planted. . . .
7. Unquestionably we of the Allied Nations owe it to the unfortunate people of Italy, to do everything within our power to remove from the soil of this ancient land, one of the most fiendish weapons of death ever conceived by the mind of

¹⁵³ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), I.P.W./55 Proposed Utilization of Italian Service Personnel for Mine Clearance, accessed March 27, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/005735/8BIT/10000_120_005735.djvu, 3-6.

men. And what we owe; is owed a thousand time over, by the Germans. Let them take up their mines.¹⁵⁴

Going back to our main topic, the Italian Government, informed about the project, immediately reported, on May 15, its approval “on general principle,” and then better defined the request. During the following days, it requested 21,000 POWs with the plan to employing 5,000 of them for excavation work in the lower part of the Po Valley (3,000) and the Tiber Valley (2,000), 6,000 POWs in the mines located in Sardinia and Grosseto province, and the remaining 10,000 POWs in mine clearance work, with an initial allotment of 3,000 prisoners. Even though suggested by the Local Government Subcommission, no request was advanced for POWs in support of the grain harvest and railway maintenance. The other most relevant points were that the Italians demanded that the prisoners be maintained and administered—including questions of discipline—by the Allies and reported the need for logistic support in terms of equipment, transport, fuel, and lubricant. At the same time, the document underlined that the Italian Government had no troops under its command to provide guards nor available allotment to recruit new units, given the imposed ceiling on the troop strength of the Italian Army¹⁵⁵ However, by that time, this aspect was well known to the AC and AFHQ authorities but it never emerged as a critical obstacle able to hinder this project.

¹⁵⁴ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Reports from Regions, Mine Clearing Convoys, etc., including Final Report, accessed April 11, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000727/8BIT/10000_105_000727.djvu, 194-197.

¹⁵⁵ Italian National Archives, Conditions of Surrender, German Forces, and Post-Surrender Disposal and Treatment as PW, 92-94.

Indeed, on July 9, 1945, the Local Government Subcommission, led by Colonel Cripps, in coordination with the Italian Engineer Corps HQ, headed by Major General Oreste Crivaro, released the final version of “the proposed scheme for employment of German prisoners of war on mine clearance in Italy” to submit to the AFHQ for approval. However, before proceeding in the examination of the most relevant points of this document, in order to provide a more accurate background, it is appropriate to underline that despite the existing difference in the legal status of surrendered personnel and POWs, this document, as many others examined, did not provide any substantial distinction between the two terms, which are mainly used in an interchangeable way. Furthermore, no change occurred even when, starting from July 1945, AFHQ reclassified the status of all German POWs—with exception of the recalcitrant categories—as surrendered enemy forces.¹⁵⁶

Moving to the cited plan, it appears to be well articulated, consisting of a main body, providing a general and clear overview of the document, and seven appendixes, reporting, with precise details, the requirement in terms of personnel, vehicles, and equipment, and their distribution both in terms of the units and their deployment on the Italian territory. In more detail, the duration of the work was estimated at 50 months, in the option of having available 3,000 operators, and in a variable period from 17 to 18 months with 10,000 operators. For a more effective organization, the Italian territory was divided into zones and subzones, not always corresponding to the geographic regional borders, and the units were placed under the technical control of the Italian Corps of

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 42.

Engineers, to better coordinate the operations with the Italian civilian and military units already committed in these operations. As an additional element, it was suggested to employ organic engineer units of the German Army, without their officers but only NCOs, and to organize them into basic units of 100 men, under the technical supervision of an Italian Engineers officer. Then, given the assumption that these engineer units were already qualified, the idea was to have 10 teams composed of five instructors to provide the additional training, whenever necessary. For the guarding of the initial 3,000 prisoners, the overall requirement was assessed as 150 Carabinieri and 750 soldiers. Meanwhile, for the housing, in consideration of the shortage of available buildings, the proposal was to set up camps of 130 persons, consisting of 100 POWs and 30 guards.¹⁵⁷ This was an accurate plan that showed the strong commitment of Cripps and the Italian institutions to solving the perilous problem of the mortal minefields scattered on the Italian territory.

¹⁵⁷ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance Scheme (use of surrendered personnel) Correspondence, 59-71.

Table 1. Suggested Establishment for Parties of 100 POWs

	OFFRS	Sgt's	L/Cpls	Pvt's	TOTAL	Sgt's	Cpls	L/Cpls	Pvt's	TOTAL
1. Commandant	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
2. <u>Command</u>										
Assistant Commandant	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
NCO I/C	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Clerks	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	1	-	1
Storekeepers	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	1
Medical Orderlies	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	1
Orderlies	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	1
Cooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
3. <u>Guard</u>										
Commandant	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
CC.RR.	-	1	4	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Guards (Military)	-	1	3	12	16	-	-	-	-	-
4. <u>Transport Section</u>										
See Appendix "D"	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	10	13
5. 2 Mine Clearing Squads	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	10	64	80
TOTALS	2	3	10	15	30	4	5	13	78	100

Source: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance Scheme (use of surrendered personnel) Correspondence, accessed March 27, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000722/8BIT/10000_105_000722.djvu, 141, 93.

However, in consideration of the absence of any feedback from AFHQ, on July 25 and August 4, Brigadier General Upjohn sent out two additional letters stressing the urgency of this matter in terms of public safety and in consideration of the necessity to

coordinate the following activity with the Italian Government.¹⁵⁸ The final decision eventually arrived on August 16, more than one month after the scheme was submitted and about three months after the initial correspondence on this matter was released. With an elaborate two-page letter, the AFHQ G-5 stated that there were no German POWs to be made available for mine clearance.¹⁵⁹

During the same months when this project was developing, the Allies—but mainly the American commands—began to implement the policy of employing the German POWs in supporting work, in order to release the Italian POWs and the Italian Military Service units from these duties, with the official purpose of allowing them to return to civilian life and eventually, be absorbed into the Italian economy. Meanwhile, no civilian labor was—or at least was supposed to be—replaced. Given the size of this replacement process, within the complex context of an increasing level of unemployment and economic inflation, it did not last a long time, since energetic protests began to emerge among the Italian population, accusing the Anglo-American units of discharging Italian workers in favor of German POWs.¹⁶⁰ During this time, the numbers of strikes and the resentment toward the prisoners significantly increased, sometimes resulting in acts of violence and popular unrest. The question of the POWs soon became a matter of concern

¹⁵⁸ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance Scheme (use of surrendered personnel) Correspondence, 56-58.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

¹⁶⁰ Singular is the fact that, in October 1945, the Italian institutions complained about the employment of German POWs as guards in depots and other Allied installations in the province of Frosinone.

at the national level, requiring the direct involvement of the most influential representatives of the Italian Government, the AC, and the AFHQ.¹⁶¹

In conclusion, not only did the mine clearance problem remain unsolved, but also, as a result of the failure of the examined plan, internal disagreements emerged in the AC HQ. On August 22, 1945, Colonel Cripps, presenting the status of the minefield clearance problem in Italy, defined the commitment of the Italian Army as the only feasible way-ahead for a rapid solution of this issue. This idea did not find favorable support in the plan of the Land Forces Subcommittee MMIA, which strongly opposed this decision, highlighting the impossibility of executing any further tasks in a context where the economic resources were limited and the Italian Army was already close to the imposed ceiling on its size.¹⁶²

However, within such a dynamic scenario, by that time four Italian mine clearance companies, under the AC authority, and about 1,500 civilians were daily risking their lives in conducting demining operations. Although the number of operators was quite far from the planned 10,000, the process of recruiting, organizing, and equipping them was nevertheless quite complicated and full of obstacles.

¹⁶¹ Italian National Archive, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Conditions of Surrender, German Forces, and Postal-Surrender Disposal and Treatment as PW July 1945-January 1947, accessed March 26, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/136/000306/8BIT/10000_136_000306.djvu, 70-76.

¹⁶² Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance Scheme (use of surrendered personnel) Correspondence, 11-22.

CHAPTER 4
THE ITALIANS' PERFORMANCE: BETWEEN
THE HAMMER AND THE ANVIL

The population looks to the Allied and Italian military authorities to put an end to the scourge of these insidious arms which are claiming victims after victims. Thousands of civilians have been killed by mines, making the county people distrustful.

— Italian Ministry of War, Letter dated 19 August 1944 to MMIA Branch
Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied
Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance,
Correspondence, Vol. I

Reorganizing the *Regio Esercito*

The specific nature of the problem of the landmines and other ERW would suggest as an immediate and obvious solution, the employment of the *Regio Esercito* (Italian Army) and its engineer units, but this did not happen. Experience dictates that at least two fundamental elements are necessary to overcome problems and difficulties; they are the will and the resources. If, by the time this issue began to emerge during the first months of the Italian Campaign, the former was present in the minds of the Italians and increasingly, in many of the Allied administrators, the latter remained extremely limited and deficient in the entire country and the Italian Army as well. An accurate examination of this last aspect would require a specific study that lies outside the objectives of this thesis. However, an overall illustration of the condition of the *Regio Esercito* is essential to providing a better understanding of the evolution of the landmines and ERW problem.

The Italian Armed Forces and above all the Army, were at that time in a condition of extreme distress and limited capabilities due to several reasons. In addition to the

disastrous military results from the three years of fighting since the beginning of the war, the events of September 1943 put the Italian soldiers in a more critical situation. The physical division of the country, born in a climate of hate and revenge, and with irreconcilable objectives, had mutilated the *Regio Esercito* and deprived it of all military manufacturing facilities and the majority of the logistic installations, exacerbating the already existing shortage of resources.¹⁶³ An additional consequence of the collapse of the Italian institutions was that by the middle of November many Army units were in desperate financial conditions, with the troops not receiving their pay for several weeks.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it was most probable that the policy and directives defined by the Allies that assumed the most relevant role in determining the capabilities and tasks of the Italian Army, as part of the application of the terms of the two armistices.

Discussion concerning the status and the future functions of the Italian forces in the operations was the subject of debate between the Italian and Allied parties starting in the days immediately after the enforcement of the short-term armistice. On September 14, 1943, after Lieutenant General MacFarlane, by that time Chief of the Military Mission to the Italian Government, met with the Italian leadership relocated in Brindisi, he sent back

¹⁶³ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces, Army, Vol. I, accessed March 31, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/100/000078/8BIT/10000_100_000078.djvu, 89.

¹⁶⁴ The solution was to have the Allies, who by that time had begun to issue Allied Military Lire, advance the necessary funds. Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces, Army, Vol. II, accessed April 5, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/100/000079/8BIT/10000_100_000079.djvu, 31-36.

to the AFHQ the minutes of that meeting. In this document, he described the *Regio Esercito* as “practically immobile,” with ammunition for no more than two days of fighting, without tanks, with short availability of transportation, and with no petrol.¹⁶⁵ He suggested, in his conclusions, that “to keep the flag flying, they might be formed into a corps, . . . but it would be a corps of extremely low value. Think it would be best to form this corps and put it under Monty for static use at ports and on lines of communication.”¹⁶⁶ There was more hopefulness and confidence on the Italian side considering that, during the following days, General Ambrosio not only reported the fact that Italy was determined to fight until the entire territory was liberated and also after that, if necessary, but also advanced the proposal for the Italian forces to join the fight with a corps on the right flank “to operate on the right side up the eastern coastal sector.”¹⁶⁷ However, when the Italian officer advanced the question about the legal status of his Army, MacFarlane replied that the situation was “far from clear and anomalous,”

¹⁶⁵ In the same document, Lt. Gen. MacFarlane describes the Italian representatives in these terms: “Ambrosio. Intelligent, friendly but seemed depressed and lacking in enthusiasm. Badoglio. Old, Honest, friendly and said about the right thing. The King. Very old and gaga.”

¹⁶⁶ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Armistice Terms and Declaration on War by Italy on Germany Vol. I, accessed March 31, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/100/000076/8BIT/10000_100_000076.djvu, 71-73.

¹⁶⁷ Remarkable is the fact that, because of the King’s uncertainty, the Italians would declare war on Germany about one month after these statements were released.

he knew that by that time the CCS was still finalizing some details of the “long-term” armistice.”¹⁶⁸

During the following weeks Marshall Badoglio, supported by his staff, continued to advocate requests for keeping the Italian Army fighting, proposing to bring back the units from Sardinia¹⁶⁹ and the Balkans and to rearm the Italian POWs captured by the Allies¹⁷⁰ and stressing the necessity to perform these actions in order to increase the morale among the troops and to provide a signal of strength to the RSI just activated in the north. As it emerged clearly from correspondence produced in the following months, the reasons for the Italians’ interest in having a significant commitment was above all due to the fact that, as stated by the terms of surrender, the conditions of the armistice would have been attenuated in proportion to the contribution to the war on Germany. Despite the Italian pressure and the fact that some units were reported to be of “apparently fairly high Italian standard,” MacFarlane confirmed his initial opinion, writing to General Eisenhower that “from all I have seen they [the Italians] have nothing left alive fit to fight

¹⁶⁸ Italian National Archives, Armistice Terms and Declaration on War by Italy on Germany Vol. I, 77-80, 95.

¹⁶⁹ In particular, the Nembo Parachute Division, considered operational by Marshall Badoglio, if the Allies would have supplied them parachutes.

¹⁷⁰ According to a document dated October 3, there were 122,000 Italian prisoners in North Africa, of whom 48,000 were employed as support units, and 32,000 in Sicily, of whom 16,000 were employed as support units. A further 165,000 Italians were in Sicily as surrendered troops.

Germans, no tanks, antiquated and inadequate equipment, very little transport and no ammunition reserves.”¹⁷¹

However, conflicting signals began to arrive at the Italian *Comando Supremo* during the following weeks. On the one hand, on September 23, they were informed of the AFHQ decision to authorize “as a principle” the Italian offer for a reinforced regiment and that the movement of the units still combat effective, from Corsica to Sardinia and then to the mainland, was under evaluation. These decisions produced great satisfaction in the Italians, also in consideration of the fact that they had agreed to temporarily limit the troop contribution to only that unit, and then to increase the contribution after the capture of Rome, estimated by the Allies to be November 1, 1943.¹⁷² It is relevant to report that this reinforced mechanized regiment known as *I Raggruppamento Motorizzato* (First Motorized Combat Group), but named by the Allies first Dapino Group and then Utile Group, after the names of its commanders, represented the first Italian Unit to return into battle since the signing of the armistice.¹⁷³ In March 1944, this group would become the *Corpo di Liberazione Italiano* (Italian Corps of Liberation), to be eventually

¹⁷¹ Italian National Archives, Armistice Terms and Declaration on War by Italy on Germany Vol. I, 78, 87.

¹⁷² Eventually, the first Allied troops entered in Rome on June 4, 1944. Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces, Army, Vol. I, 50-56, 66.

¹⁷³ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Italian Armed Forces Vol. I, accessed April 5, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/101/000425/8BIT/10000_101_000425.djvu, 38, 54, 57.

disbanded on September 24, 1944 and partially absorbed in the newly organized *Gruppi di Combattimento* (Combat Groups).¹⁷⁴

On the other hand, after extensive reports from subordinate commands regarding stores, supplies, and vehicles requisitioned by the Allies, Ambrosio began to complain and warned the Allies that, without these things, it would have been impossible to keep the Italian troops effective.¹⁷⁵ However, other important decisions were still to come. On October 10, the Allied Military Mission directed the *Comando Supremo* to relocate almost all troops from Sardinia to Corsica, leaving behind all their equipment and vehicles. The Italian Chief of Staff, strongly opposed to this plan, demanded that the order be reconsidered, perceiving this as a real disarmament that would have jeopardized any further possibility of employing those units in combat. Justifying the decision with the reason of “economy of shipping” in light of the planned move to the mainland or Sicily and underlining that the redistribution of the equipment was based on the Allied and Italian needs, AFHQ confirmed the plan.¹⁷⁶ Also, at the end of October, the Italians were notified to proceed with the constitution of a combat division as mountain troops, and the *Comando Supremo* reiterated its disappointment, underlining that the Sardinian divisions were to be considered “as trained mountain troops which could find effective

¹⁷⁴ Esercito Italiano, “Corpo Italiano di Liberazione,” accessed April 5, 2017, <http://www.esercito.difesa.it/en/History/Pagine/Italian-Corp-of-Liberation-History.aspx>.

¹⁷⁵ Italian National Archives, Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces Vol. I, 12, 65, 73.

¹⁷⁶ Italian National Archives, Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces Vol. II, 62-65.

employment in the operations that are expected to develop in northern Italy.” However, no change occurred in the Allied order.¹⁷⁷

Meanwhile, on November 19, 1943, under Anglo-American approval, Marshall of Italy Giovanni Messe, released from the status of POW, was appointed as Chief of the *Comando Supremo* in replacement of General Ambrosio, but a more critical situation would be posed to him. On December 15, the ACC conveyed to the Italians a directive of AFHQ to turn over considerable quantities of weapons and ammunition to support the combat operations in Yugoslavia. As most relevant results of this order, the co-belligerent troops would have remained almost entirely without 45-mm and 81-mm mortars and without 20-mm machine-guns, seven divisions without 47/32 antitank guns, and all nondivisional units without any 8-mm machine-guns.¹⁷⁸ The feelings and reactions in the *Comando Supremo* were effectively presented by Messe’s letter addressed to the Head of the ACC:

I have already given orders to the SMRE for preparation and handing over of arms and ammunition as requested.

I wish however to let you know, quite frankly, that the order given by AFHQ represents for me a true and unexpected disappointment.

I returned from imprisonment with the strong purpose of devoting all my efforts to put the Italian Armed Forces back on an efficient footing, so as to be able to give the greatest collaboration to the Anglo-American forces for the

¹⁷⁷ Italian National Archives, Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces Vol. II, 15; Italian National Archives, Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces Vol. I, 78.

¹⁷⁸ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Controlled Stores. Arms and Ammunitions, accessed April 2, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/000411/8BIT/10000_120_000411.djvu, 98-102.

accomplishment of [the] common aim of sweeping the Germans out of the Peninsula.

It would be superfluous for me to explain to you, General, the moral repercussions of the execution of such an order on the troops and on the commanding officers, as well as the serious disappointment and painful impression on the Italian public when they learn of it, as they are bound to, aside from serious lessening of practical efficiency which will result.¹⁷⁹

Also U.S. General Maxwell Davenport Taylor, at that time with the rank of Brigadier General and member of the ACC, providing a memorandum to the deputy ACC Chief, clearly reported the disastrous consequences expected from this order, stating that it would have eliminated any usefulness of the Italian troops with the exception of guard duty and labor roles and without any capability of assuring law and order in a period characterized by a high risk of popular uprising.¹⁸⁰ On December 18, AFHQ directed that actions were to “be accomplished without delay” and that the equipment would have to be later replaced with Allied ones “if necessary.” However, after an initial suspension of the order, it was eventually revoked on December 27.¹⁸¹

During the next months, the situation gradually improved, sometimes weapons and equipment were sold to the Allies and not just requisitioned, and by May 1, 1944, the AFHQ released a circular directing all Allied Forces to return the war material to the Italian Ground Forces unless otherwise directed by the Army Subcommittee of

¹⁷⁹ Italian National Archives, Controlled Stores. Arms and Ammunitions, 103-104.

¹⁸⁰ Italian National Archives, Controlled Stores. Arms and Ammunitions, 100.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 88, 90.

AC HQ.¹⁸² However, to underline the difficulties in having this order executed, the AAI had to release an additional letter on July 1, indicating that “cases have occurred where property, transport and materials belonging to the Italian Forces have been removed from them without proper authority and when the operational need for such action no longer existed,” and AC HQ did the same on August 10.¹⁸³

Despite all this process, from the examined documents, it emerges that the AFHQ G-3 had already defined the future of the Italian Army since the beginning of October 1943 with the release of the official plan concerning this matter. The plan clearly referred to “the difficulties of command, maintenance and replacements, and to their [the Italians’] doubtful fighting value.”¹⁸⁴ Then, it suggested to limit the minimum level of commitment in direct battle, advising that whenever political pressure would be imposed to use them, there was no option to employ more than one division without disrupting the Allied capabilities. In consideration of these aspects, the primary purposes of the co-belligerent Army were indicated in the following terms:

1. Maintain a maximum fighting force shifting from 30,000 to 40,000 men.

¹⁸² Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Arms and Ammunitions February-September 1944, accessed April 2, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/101/000477/8BIT/10000_101_000477.djvu, 32, 34.

¹⁸³ A further direction released by the War Material Disposal Subcommittee of AC HQ was to stop civilians collecting the abandoned materials owned by the Italian Army, stating that such operations would be permitted only under the approval of that subcommittee. Arms and Ammunitions, 5-7.

¹⁸⁴ Italian National Archives, Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces Vol. I, 90.

2. Employ 10 divisions—one in Sicily, three in Sardinia and six for the peninsular territories south of the Pisa-Rimini line—for security duties along the lines of communication.
3. Retain antiaircraft and coastal defense units.
4. Form as much as possible service units or as an alternative, demobilize units in order to use their personnel as civilian workers.
5. Keep in service specialist troops, including POWs, able to operate as engineer, transportation, and signal units.

As an additional significant consideration, the document underlined that the Italian captured ammunition in North Africa, requested by *Comando Supremo* to supply their troops in consideration to the impossibility of producing new ones, was in great part no longer available because it had been allocated to French forces and other units.¹⁸⁵

These indications found precise application in the reorganization of the Italian Army. In particular, apart from the overall authorized ceiling, the *Regio Esercito*'s troops were organized in very detailed categories and sub-categories. Therefore, while the numbers slightly shifted according to the evolution of the Italian Campaign, for instance, on August 31, 1944, the authorized total strength of the Italian Ground Forces added up to 364,000 troops, 38,000 of them (about 10 percent) were designed as internal security forces, 55,000 (about 15 percent) were Carabinieri, and only 57,000 (about 16 percent) were allowed as combat units. Meanwhile, the most relevant part was represented by service units that, with a ceiling of 168,000 troops, constituted 46 percent of the entire

¹⁸⁵ Italian National Archives, Use and Disposition of Italian Armed Forces Vol. I, 88-98.

force.¹⁸⁶ The significant number of this last category may also better explain how relevant, at the social level, was the impact of the Anglo-American decision to replace the Italian manpower with German POWs at the end of the conflict, as examined at the end of the previous chapter. Figure 17 also shows how the other 13 percent of the troops were employed.

¹⁸⁶ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), SD/94 Ceiling ITI Army, accessed April 2, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/000643/8BIT/10000_120_000643.djvu, 89.

1. Administrative Installations	27,000
2. Combat formations, including C.I.L.	57,000
3. Service Units under Allied Command	
(a) P.B.S.	51,000
(b) FLETH Army	10,000
(c) Allied Garrison SARDINIA	9,000
(d) Allied Garrison CORSICA	5,000
(e) British Command	93,000
4. A.A. & C.D.	9,000
5. Internal Security troops, including	
(a) A.C.C.	3,000
(b) 18 Guard Battalions(800)	14,400
(c) S.I.M.	1,500
(d) 2 Divs SICILY	10,000
(e) 1 Div SARDINIA	5,000
(f) Internal Security troops	4,100
6. Reinforcements, sick in hospital, not assigned to units, and unassigned personnel, including Liaison Officers, Interpreters, etc.	10,000
7. CC.RR, including CC.RR assigned to Military Commanders Formations	55,000
	<hr/> 364,000

Figure 17. Total Authorized Strength of the Italian Army
on August 31, 1944

Source: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), SD/94 Ceiling ITI Army, accessed April 2, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/000643/8BIT/10000_120_000643.djvu, 89.

The Italian troops were furthermore organized into three categories according to their operational and consequently logistic dependence. The comprehensive policy was to

provide to each soldier considered “in fact effective”¹⁸⁷ a basic scale of supply and to have this incremented by each Allied commander according to the tasks assigned to these units. The BR-ITI category included all Italian Armed Forces under British command and for which maintenance was a British responsibility. The US-ITI category grouped all Italian Armed Forces under United States command and for which maintenance was a U.S. responsibility. The ITI-ITI category was represented by Italian Armed Forces under the command of the Theater Commander through the Italian Ministry of War, for which maintenance was the Italian government’s responsibility with a shared support between the United Kingdom and the United States, as authorized by CCS.¹⁸⁸ According to the instruction released by the AFHQ in September 1944, the Italian Ministry of War maintained, under the overall supervision of MMIA branch of the Land Forces Subcommittee of AC HQ, the responsibilities concerning the distribution of some categories of supply to the ITI-ITI troops and the task of assisting in the delivery of supplies to the US-ITI and BR-ITI units, using its own Italian formations. A similar procedure was organized for the maintenance of the transportation means. Meanwhile, the medical support of the Italian soldiers was considered a host-nation responsibility, although the use of the Anglo-American services was authorized in case of emergency.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Defined by the AFHQ letter as “one who is a bona fide member of the Italian armed forces, either officer, non-commissioned officer, or other ranks, duly enrolled or enlisted who is subject to the laws of war and the Geneva Convention, borne on the rolls of the Ministry concerned, and actually performing the duty to which assigned as shown by the official strength returns of the Ministry concerned.”

¹⁸⁸ For instance, the document assigns the responsibilities in these terms: Subsistence US, Medical Supply and fuels UK, Clothing joint US and UK.

¹⁸⁹ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Supply of Italian Armed Forces, accessed April 2, 2017,

Ser ial No (a)	CATEGORY		DESCRIPTION	CEILING	
	Nationality (b)	Number (c)		Item (e)	Total (f)
1.	US-IT	3(A)	P.B.H.	51,500	
2.		3(B)	Fifth Army	17,000	
3.		5(C)	U.S.A.A.F.	5,500	
4.		3(D)	COMMICA	5,000	
5.		6(A)	Rfts	4,500	
6.		-	TOTAL US-IT		83,500
7.	BR-IT	3(A)	Combat Troops incl staff at CESANO	50,750	
8.		3(A)	AFHQ Combat Reserve	700	
9.		6(B)	Combat Rfts	11,250	
10.		3(B)	Service Troops	93,000	
11.		6(B)	Service Rfts	4,800	
12.		-	TOTAL BR-IT		160,500
13.	IT-IT	1	Administration	27,000	
14.		5(A)	Allied Commission	1,000	
15.		5(B)	Guard Engs	17,600	
16.		5(C)	IAI	1,500	
17.		5(D & E)	Internal Security Divn	15,000	
18.		4, 5 (F G & H)	Miscellaneous (searchlight units (incl sqd'l etc)	1,200	
19.		6(G)	Rfts	3,700	
20.		-	TOTAL IT-IT		69,000
21.	GRAND TOTAL				313,000

Figure 18. Ceiling of the Italian Army Divided by "Nationality" Responsible for Command and Maintenance, as of March 1945

Source: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Ceilings+ Categories policy+ General, accessed April 2, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/005218/8BIT/10000_120_005218.djvu, 50.

NOTE: Text at serial number 7: Combat Troops including staff at Cesano; text at serial number 8: AFHQ combat reserve; text at serial number 9: Combat Reinforcements; Text at serial number 11: Service Reinforcement.

http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/109/001152/8BIT/10000_109_001152.djvu, 78-79, 101-105.

Significant for this study is the fact that only 3,000 soldiers of the ITI-ITI category served in support of the AC HQ, representing less than one percent of the entire authorized forces of the Italian Army. Even when the progress in the military campaign toward the north expanded the territories to supervise, and the efforts to stabilize the Italian institutions would have become in principle more relevant, this number never changed, at least until the end of the conflict.¹⁹⁰ This was a quite low percentage considering the extensive range of AC responsibilities, which included the mine clearance and ERW disposal activities, but a consideration that provides the background for examining how difficult it was to activate and administer the mine clearance companies.

The Mine Clearance Companies

On January 4, 1944, the Italian General Director of the Engineers, Major General Crivaro, underlining the necessity to reduce the risk of accidental fatalities and to allow agriculture and the national economy to restart, ordered his units to immediately proceed in clearing the Italian and German minefields present in their areas of responsibility.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ On May 4, 1945, AFHQ directed the MMIA to consider the increase of the AC personnel of additional 6000 men. Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), SD/94/5 Ceiling + Categories Category 5, accessed April 2, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/000646/8BIT/10000_120_000646.djvu, 28.

¹⁹¹ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Ministero della Guerra, Direzione Generale del Genio, Divisione Materiali, letter n.II/5547/M. dated January 3, 1944.

Remarkable is the fact that, given the necessity to employ skilled personnel and adequate equipment, the order was to defuse and lift this ordnance rather than destroy it.¹⁹²

Nevertheless, from an examination of the periodic reports concerning the status and the activities of Italian engineer units, released by the Land Forces Subcommittee MMIA, by the end of January 1944, there were on the mainland 4,332 engineers employed as part of organic units of the Italian Army, 4,577 employed in other non-organic units, and another 1,227 as part of transportation units. Out of this total of 10,136 soldiers, only a company of the 23rd *Artieri d'Arresto* (stopping engineer) Battalion of the XXXI Corps, consisting of about 200 men—less than 2 percent—was employed in mine lifting in the Apulia territory,¹⁹³ while the majority of the activities consisted of repairing or building bridges, improving roads, and generic support service.¹⁹⁴ When, starting in May 1944, the reports began to include the units in Sicily, the priority remained on the improvement of the lines of communication with no evidence of mine clearance activities.¹⁹⁵ The situation was different in Sardinia where, according to a

¹⁹² The common procedure was to remove the explosive, usually amatol, and whenever possible to process it in order to obtain its constituting parts, the TNT and ammonium nitrate, to be respectively used in quarries and agriculture.

¹⁹³ From November 1943 and to all February 1944, the 23rd *Artieri* Battalion lifted mines in Gagliano del Capo, Lecce Province.

¹⁹⁴ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), State of Engineer (R.E.) Units Italian Army, accessed April 7, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/000012/8BIT/10000_120_000012.djvu, 89-91, 132.

¹⁹⁵ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), RE/2/6/1 Weekly Returning of Engineer Units, accessed April 9, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/002971/8BIT/10000_120_002971.djvu, 150-160.

statement released by the Italian Ministry of War on August 19, 1944, the mine lifting was to be considered concluded with the result of about 262,000 mines removed, 429 hectares cleared, and a toll of 36 men killed and 18 injured among the military operators.¹⁹⁶ Most probably this rapid success was the result of a higher degree of independence of the Italian *Comando Supremo* in employing troops for this task, a fact that did not happen on the mainland.

Under the pressure of the local population and Italian institutions, the AMG administrators in regions III (Southern Region), IV (Lazio), V (Marche-Abruzzi), and VIII (Tuscany) increasingly reported the necessity to undertake actions in these territories and in particular, in those areas that, being part of the Gustav line, were extensively affected by minefields, booby traps, and ERW. In April 1944, Major C. A. Latimer, Regional Engineer, AMG HQ for Region V, proposed to organize a company for the purpose of sweeping mined areas “not of sufficient importance for the military operations to merit the attention of the Army.” In a very singular way and apparently politically correct attitude, he never specified from whom these soldiers should be provided, limiting his assessment to the concept that “it does not seem right to ask Allied troops to take the

¹⁹⁶ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. III, accessed April 9, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000620/8BIT/10000_105_000620.djvu, 11-12; Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, accessed April 9, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000621/8BIT/10000_105_000621.djvu, 136.

dangerous labor of clearing Italian land . . . in order to make it again available to civilian use.”¹⁹⁷ However the message was clear: let the Italians be employed for this job.

It is not possible to accurately define how influential the letter produced by Latimer was but, starting from his suggestion, on May 3, the Deputy Executive Commissioner of AC gained the positive advice of the subordinate the Army Subcommission MMIA and asked the AAI HQ for the allotment of the 13th *Artieri d’Arresto* Company, or the 164th *Artieri d’Arresto* Company, at that time still stationed in Sardinia, to Region V to conduct mine clearance activities in that territory.¹⁹⁸ About two weeks later, AAI HQ reported the unavailability of these units because they were “earmarked for dilution of British Artisan Works Coys” and most probably to avoid any further request, stressed the fact that the allotment of personnel for the exclusive task of minefield clearance was considered uneconomical in consideration of the extremely changeable nature of the services required.¹⁹⁹

Although the project had failed, on June 2, the *Comando Supremo* received a request from the 5th Army to urgently mobilize a company to be employed in this activity but surprisingly, the plan had not been coordinated with AC, which stopped the process.²⁰⁰ This aroused loud complaints among the Italians and of such a level that the

¹⁹⁷ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance and Unexploded Bombs, accessed April 9, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/109/001742/8BIT/10000_109_001742.djvu, 129.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 123, 127.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 95.

²⁰⁰ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, 154, 155.

matter reached the Italian Council of Ministers, the undersecretary of which wrote a letter requesting to proceed with this urgently necessary plan.²⁰¹ The overlapping of these two events would lead to the first real solution to the mine clearance and ERW problem. With AAI HQ and Italian approval, the Allies decided to form two new companies and to assign them to AC HQ, as part of their established ceiling of 3,000 men. The necessary knowledge would be provided through six weeks of “on the job training” performed with the 13th and 164th *Artieri d’Arresto* companies that, having executed mine clearance operations in Sardinia, were considered experienced in the sector.²⁰²

Therefore, having received MMIA approval, the 13th *Artieri d’Arresto* Company, with a strength of 196 personnel, moved to Region IV, specifically to Gaeta,²⁰³ (a small town on the Mediterranean coast about 150 km south of Rome) to train the newly named 561st Mine Clearance Company. Meanwhile, the 164th *Artieri d’Arresto* Company, with a strength of 261 personnel, moved to Region V, specifically to Pescara, a city on the Adriatic coast, to train the 562nd Mine Clearance Company. Of course, there were not enough resources to satisfy all local needs; the Civil Affair Branch of the Regional Control and Military Government Section retained the responsibility for deciding to whom to assign the mine clearance assets. Nevertheless, requests for support continued to

²⁰¹ Ibid., 153.

²⁰² Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. I, accessed April 10, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000618/8BIT/10000_105_000618.djvu, 241; Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance and Unexploded Bombs, 7-8.

²⁰³ A document describes Gaeta as “principally a repair port for small merchant ships and fishing . . . [where] the Germans destroyed practically every house and even mined the debris.” Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. I, 173.

arrive, most probably with the hope of a further increase in the company strength, as a for instance, shown through this appeal submitted on July 29, by the Agricultural Officer for Region III:²⁰⁴ “May I beg to request that one Company be assigned to Region 3 as soon as possible form mine clearance in the Region between the Volturno and Garigliano Rivers, The centre of the mine infested area is Sessa Aurunca and it is suggested that the Company assigned to this Region should be stationed at this Town.”²⁰⁵ However, by that time, the orders for the 561st and 562nd companies were already released and despite some days of delay, the four companies reached their destinations, ready to report to the respective Regional AMG HQ.

In consideration of the performance of tasks similar to those of the *Artieri d’Arresto*, these new companies were structured on the same pattern and therefore consisted of eight officers, 11 NCOs and 190 other ranks for a total of 209 men. In reality, the effective strength of the 562nd Company was of 210 soldiers, while the 561st Company was severely undermanned with only 130. Nevertheless, the most significant aspect concerning the personnel was that both units were mainly recruited from among the 600 men staging in the province of Naples, originally intended to form the battalion of workers necessary for harvesting. Consequently, very few or none of them had expertise on mines and explosives.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance and Unexploded Bombs, 23, 34-36.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 26.

²⁰⁶ Italian National Archives, State of Engineer (R.E.) Units Italian Army, 44-45; Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. V, accessed April 9, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000625/8BIT/10000_105_000625.djvu, 70.

	PERSONNEL			TRANSPORT				
	Officers	Non-Commissioned Officers	en/or	cars	light trucks	medium trucks	motorcycles	bicycles
Company Headquarters	4	3	34	1	1	5	2	1
4 Mine Clearance Platoons	4	8	156	-	-	-	4	-
TOTAL COMPANY	8	11	190	1	1	5	6	1

Figure 19. Structure of the Mine Clearance Company
as of December 1944

Source: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. I, accessed April 7, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000618/8BIT/10000_105_000618.djvu, 189-195.

NOTE: The resources available for first aid appear quite limited, moreover considering that the company was generally spread among different locations. In detail, the medical team was composed of one medical officer, one NCO and one OR, and they had no ambulance or other vehicles permanently assigned.

Nevertheless, the most relevant problems were of a logistic nature and soon emerged. On August 3, the MMIA delegate, after having visited the two units in Gaeta, reported that the companies were with no water, rations, or accommodations and that the Provincial Commissioner Office was unaware of their arrival.²⁰⁷ In Pescara, the situation

²⁰⁷ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Unexploded Bombs and Mine Clearance, accessed April 7, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/109/001743/8BIT/10000_109_001743.djvu, 97.

was not much better; Lieutenant Colonel C. H. A. Frence, Executive Officer for the AMG Region V, on August 5, reported that logistic issues were hampering the training. The soldiers of both companies had no clothing and boots, no equipment for demining, and no transportation.

Concerning the uniforms and boots, as well as blankets and other essential clothes, the solution was not immediate because the standardized procedure applied for the ITI-ITI units assigned in support of the 5th or 8th Armies was not applicable in this case, where AC HQ retained the operational command. However, AC HQ had no logistics in place, and the only possible way to solve the problem was relying on the Italian and Allied resources and structures.²⁰⁸ As an interesting aspect, the Allies, during the attempts to overcome this issue, underlined that while the 561st and 562nd companies were supposed to be already clothed. The companies coming from the Sardinia were expected to receive nothing in consideration of the policy, to provide uniforms and boots to the soldiers only once they arrived at their final destination, in order to prevent the loss of clothing in case of desertion or other unplanned events.²⁰⁹ Eventually, during the following weeks, the HQ Campania assumed the administrative responsibility for the 561st Company and the 209th Division did the same for the 562nd Company, but many problems remained.

The situation in terms of transportation and petrol was more complicated. The 13th *Artieri d'Arresto* Company in Gaeta moved with nine vehicles but was “apparently

²⁰⁸ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance and Unexploded Bombs, 109; Italian National Archives, Unexploded Bombs and Mine Clearance, 98.

²⁰⁹ Italian National Archives, Unexploded Bombs and Mine Clearance, 88.

an error.” However, under the order of the Army Subcommittee MMIA, four trucks and two motorcycles were handed over to the 561st Mine Clearance Company.²¹⁰ A similar procedure was not applicable in Pescara, considering both that the unit’s personnel had arrived by train and that transportation was completely unavailable.²¹¹ Not until the middle of August did the 562nd Mine Clearance Company eventually receive two requisitioned trucks, the minimum required to transport rations and move the equipment to the workplace.²¹² As for clothes there was no policy, nor was the provision of petrol regulated by any clear policy. Therefore, in the vacuum, the AMG administrator in Region IV requested to take gasoline from the Allied pipeline running through his territory and supported this idea with the savings made to the tires of the vehicles.²¹³ Meanwhile in Pescara the fuel supply continued to be a bureaucratic problem for a long time because the Allies considered the requisitioned vehicles under the Italian Administration, but the Italians considered the company under the Allied Command, so that as a result, by the middle of October 1944, the Commanding Officer of the 562nd Company had to pay a bill of 47,000 Lire on his own.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance and Unexploded Bombs, 13, 24-25.

²¹¹ The 164th *Artieri d’Arresto* Company was ordered to leave its vehicles in Sardinia.

²¹² Italian National Archives, Unexploded Bombs and Mine Clearance, 34.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 50, 91, 95.

²¹⁴ The officer was eventually reimbursed after that the AMG Provincial Officer complained about this fact. Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, accessed April 7, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000622/8BIT/10000_105_000622.djvu, 52-55.

Among the most important deficiencies in the equipment, the most significant was the scarcity or absence of mine detectors. Completely unavailable in the Italian Army and fundamental for the AAI combat troops, faced with multiple requests for their provision, the most common answer was to resort to “prodding” as the primary method of clearance.²¹⁵ However, during the following months the two companies finally received some mine detectors of American design on loan from AAI, but the provision of spare parts and batteries soon became a matter of such high importance that in November 1944, Brigadier General Upjohn had to write a letter to AFHQ G-5 to receive 30 battery packs.²¹⁶

However, despite these tough conditions, the units gradually began their activities. An inspection to the 562nd Mine Clearance Company conducted on August 2, 1944, reported the clothing as good, because recently refitted, the food was described as fair and the hygiene satisfactory, even if no soap was received for three months. Nevertheless, discipline was assessed “according to the British standards” as bad and the moral as well, most probably in consideration of the poor quality of the rations.²¹⁷ Similarly, a review of the state of the 561st Mine Clearance Company conducted on August 21 reported the personnel in awful conditions. Clothing and equipment were still missing and the personnel were described as completely untrained and without any sort

²¹⁵ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance and Unexploded Bombs, 22, 24.

²¹⁶ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. III, 47.

²¹⁷ Italian National Archives, Unexploded Bombs and Mine Clearance, 76-77.

of discipline.²¹⁸ In consideration of this critical condition, the Regional representative demanded to not transfer the 13th *Artieri d'Arresto* Company and extend their training period. However, to confirm the absolute prominence of the military efforts, AAI confirmed that the unit had to relocate as soon as possible from Gaeta to the Florence area.²¹⁹

In September, the Mine Clearance Companies were placed under the Admin Section, led by Colonel Cripps, which in the future would become the Local Government Subsection. In this transition, the units were described as “not functioning very satisfactorily mainly due to lack of equipment,” and further inspection would confirm this feeling.²²⁰ A survey of the 561st Company in the Gaeta area in November reported the soldiers sleeping in houses with no doors and windows and to confirm the miserable conditions in which they were operating, they had no ambulance even if the casualties were to be sent to a hospital in Naples, more than 100 km away.²²¹ It is easy to imagine the detrimental effect of this latter aspect on the morale of soldiers, who were certainly aware of the extremely small probability of surviving such a long trip, even if just slightly injured. A further inspection of the same unit took place on December 15, and the soldiers were still reported with boots and uniforms in poor condition, with no underclothing nor overcoat, and a new and unexpected element emerge from this report.

²¹⁸ The report mentioned an “Italian officer in pyjamas in the middle of the day.” Italian National Archives, Unexploded Bombs and Mine Clearance, 53.

²¹⁹ Italian National Archives, Unexploded Bombs and Mine Clearance, 49, 56-58.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

²²¹ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. III, 12.

Faced with the limited performance of the company, the Commanding Officer, Captain Natale De Marchi, stated that one of the reasons was the fact that they had received no training from 13th *Artieri d'Arresto* Company, even if they were expected to do that, and that consequently they had “to learn the subject from books and other sources.”²²²

A much better and different situation was faced by the 562nd Mine Clearance Company, which after an inspection conducted on January 25, 1945 by Major J. Stewart Reakes, a member of AMG HQ Region V, was assessed as “efficient and well run.”²²³ Despite the initial negative assessment of the past August, this time the morale was reported high and the discipline good, and the men employed in a wide area and duly organized in multiple squads, while the only significant problem was the extremely low number of available vehicles.²²⁴ The operational performance was excellent with an overall balance of 150,687 mines lifted or destroyed, and 600 unexploded bombs and about 800 tons of abandoned ammunition and explosives disposed. Unfortunately, as part of this balance there were also 11 killed and 42 wounded among the unit personnel and 166 killed and 357 wounded in the local populace, even if it was assumed that many civilian casualties were unknown to the local authorities.²²⁵ As part of his conclusion, Reakes, aware of the less efficient results of the 561st Mine Clearance Company

²²² Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. I, 169-170, 172.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 3-7.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

proposed to the higher headquarters to temporarily attach part of the personnel of the 561st to the more effective sister company for some weeks.²²⁶

It is hard to assess why by the same time, the company in Gaeta had removed no more than 1,670 mines and was still struggling with so many logistic difficulties. Most probably, problems of leadership or scarcity of resources played a critical role, but there may also have been other aspects, such as the nature of the terrain or booby-trapped mines, which may have influenced the final outcome.²²⁷ The only objective data that is possible to report with certainty was that the 561st Company remained by the end of December, still severely undermanned with a total of 159 soldiers and therefore 50 men still missing.²²⁸

An additional aspect to underline is the relation between the mine clearance companies and the disposal of other ERW, considering that the distinction between these two roles remained ambiguous to some Allied administrators. For example, on August 1, 1944, the AC Liaison Officer, reporting the unavailability of any Bomb Disposal Units to solve a problem in Region IV, suggested to “allocate the Italian Mine Clearance Company deployed in Gaeta.”²²⁹ Modern doctrine and common knowledge would suggest that these two tasks are associated with different skills and therefore different units. In this sense, it appears rational that the AFHQ directive, approving the mine

²²⁶ Ibid., 3-7.

²²⁷ Ibid., 55.

²²⁸ Italian National Archives, State of Engineer (R.E.) Units Italian Army, 5.

²²⁹ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance and Unexploded Bombs, 27, 47.

clearance activity performed by the Italian units, confirmed that the Anglo-American bomb disposal team had the responsibility to carry out these operations, limiting the common task to the mere fencing of the ordnance.²³⁰ On the other hand, given the evident lack of bomb disposal assets, the strict adherence to this regulation would undoubtedly hamper the mine clearance operations and the Italian units' availability to completely clear the territories of minefields.²³¹

During the following months, the advance of the frontline resulted in two additional developments. The first was the gradual relocation of the 561st and 562nd toward the north, and the second was the constitution of two new formations, named with the following numbers: 563rd and 564th Mine Clearance Companies. The 561st Mine Clearance Company moved first into the Leghorn area and then into Liguria,²³² remaining on the Mediterranean coast, while the 562nd Mine Clearance Company relocated on the eastern side of the Emilia Region, where there were supposed to be more than a million mines and the operations became more difficult and slower.²³³ The reasons were mainly to be found in the increasing number of non-magnetic mines, which forced the company to exclusively use the prodding method, and the fact that the ordnance was

²³⁰ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, 101.

²³¹ The question remains, how the mine clearance company could have developed an adequate knowledge on this subject.

²³² Even if the Liguria Region was not a battle area, its territory has been booby trapped and mined during the years 1942 and 1943.

²³³ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. III, 41-43.

extensively booby-trapped and therefore had to be destroyed in situ and no longer deactivated and lifted.²³⁴

Concerning the recruitment of the two additional units, the activation of the 563rd Mine Clearance Company was proposed by the AC HQ in January 1945, as result of a request for additional mine clearance assets submitted by the Italian Ministry of War during the previous month of December.²³⁵ Once mobilized, the formation moved to Silvi Marina, a small village in the vicinity of Pescara, where, taking advantage of the excellent results obtained by the 562nd Company, the Italian Ministry of War had decided to establish a training center for civilians and other military units. Once certified as skilled, on May 1, the unit moved to the Emilia Region, where during the following month of June it removed more than 3,750 mines, paying the price of two dead and 10 injured.²³⁶ In contrast, the other new formation, named the 564th Mine Clearance Company, was mobilized at the end of April 1945, when the end of the war in Italy was already evident. After the training in Silvi Marina and the successful certification

²³⁴ Ibid., 41.

²³⁵ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Correspondence, November 1944–January 1945, accessed April 15, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000624/8BIT/10000_105_000624.djvu, 105.

²³⁶ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. III, 45-48.

occurred on July 12, 1945, the unit composed at that time of 8 officers, 13 NCOs but only 127 other ranks, eventually move to the Emilia Region in August 1945.²³⁷

In general, the organization and the management of these new units benefitted significantly from the procedures and structure already in place thanks to the experiences gained with the 561st and 562nd Companies. However, the logistic support continued to represent the most vulnerable point, with very limited transportation and mine detectors, although the personnel were also lacking in terms of both number and quality.²³⁸ For instance, in August 1945, the MMIA Branch reported the manning deficiencies of the Mine Clearance Companies to the Italian Ministry of War, in these terms: 561st Company located in Genoa, 32 vacancies; 562nd Company located in Bologna, 33 vacancies; 563rd Company located in Bologna, 96 vacancies; 564th Company located in Pescara, 60 vacancies.²³⁹ On the other hand, with the intent to enhance the quality of the mine clearance structure, given the conclusion of the war, Major General Crivaro demanded the relocation of experienced officers and NCOs from engineer combat units, but MMIA rejected this plan.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ No similar data is available on the personnel composition of the 563rd Company. Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports from Regions, Mine Clearing Convoys, etc., including Final Report, 234-235.

²³⁸ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. III, 137.

²³⁹ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, General Correspondence, July-September 1945, accessed April 5, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000724/8BIT/10000_105_000724.djvu, 69.

²⁴⁰ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), A/110/19/1 Mine Clearance Personnel, accessed April 7,

At the beginning of May 1945, in hindsight of the conclusion of the war, Colonel Cripps advanced the suggestion to employ the eight engineer companies subordinate the *Gruppi di Combattimento*, for mine clearance operations on the entire Italian territory, organizing them under the supervision of the Ministry of War, but the proposal was soon refused by the MMIA Branch. This idea was advanced again during the following months, but the only active support that emerged from this analysis consisted of the detachment of a platoon of the “Legnano” Combat Group in support of the mine clearance activities in Ravenna, during the months of September and October 1945. Singular is the fact that even in the absence of any evident military necessity, when the local Italian Military headquarters asked to extend the detachment for additional time, the “Legnano” Chief of Staff replied that the operation was limited by the timeframe imposed by the MMIA and that the platoon was already planned for other urgent tasks.²⁴¹

By the end of July 1945, the 561st Mine Clearance Company was operating in Liguria, the 562nd and 563rd in the Emilia Region, and 564th still in Pescara, waiting for the move to the north. The Emilia Region was next to be handed back to the Italian Government and the only unit still considered necessary by the AC HQ was the 561st

2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/003065/8BIT/10000_120_003065.djvu, 46-49.

²⁴¹ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, General Correspondence, September-December 1945, accessed April 7, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000723/8BIT/10000_105_000723.djvu, 64-65.

Company in Liguria.²⁴² With the hand-over of the entire Italian territory on December 31, 1945, the Italian Government also took complete responsibility for and management of the mine clearance and ERW problem. The role of the military would improve in terms of supervision and management of the process, maintaining the lead of the mine clearance scheme better described in the next paragraph but, following a decision already made in September 1945, the operations on the terrain gradually devolved to civilians, abandoning the plan to use military units.²⁴³ The 561st and 562nd Companies, born together, were disbanded together on July 31, 1946 and the officers and NCOs suitable for the service of mine clearance were temporarily employed by Engineer HQs in Genova and Bologna, the other ranks and remaining personnel were put at the disposal of the respective military territorial command.²⁴⁴ The 563rd and 564th continued to operate until January 1946 but unfortunately, there is no record of their last day of existence.

The Servizio Bonifica Campi Minati

At the time when the 561st and 562nd companies mobilized, both Italians and Allies were conscious that the problem of mine clearance and other EWR removal was much bigger and certainly impossible to be solved with the limited capabilities of only

²⁴² Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), SD/4/3 Mine Clearance Coys, accessed April 2, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/002987/8BIT/10000_120_002987.djvu, 15.

²⁴³ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, General Correspondence, July-September 1945, 27.

²⁴⁴ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), SD/17/7 Org. of Units-Disbandment Orders Min. of War (Info Copies), accessed April 5, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/005046/8BIT/10000_120_005046.djvu, 105.

those two units. However, while no definitive solution had been identified, by July 1944, two concepts were already solidified in the minds of the British and American Anglo-American leaderships: the Allied Armies would never assume any active role in mine clearance activities in the rear areas, and the Italian Armed forces would never be capable of performing this task without raising the imposed troop ceiling.²⁴⁵ As a direct consequence, the first statement would result in the concept that the greatest portion of the burden had to be assumed by the Italian Government as part of the civil rehabilitation of the country. Meanwhile, given the unwillingness to increase the size of the Italian Armed Forces, the second aspect would imply that the manpower for these operations was to be recruited among the civilians.

However, by that time, the Italian perspective continued to be different, at least until August 19, 1944, when the Italian Ministry of War, with the intent to rapidly solve the examined problem, proposed to the Army Subcommittee MMIA to commit 3,200 soldiers to these operations. Organized in 16 companies to be distributed in the territories of central Italy, most affected by minefields and abandoned ammunition, the estimation was to complete the activities in a period of 75 to 90 days. As part of this plan, it was requested to employ five *Artieri d'Arresto* companies at that time utilized by the Allies as labor formations and to form another 11 companies by relocating already skilled soldiers spread among other non-engineer units.²⁴⁶ However, aware of the limited possibility of

²⁴⁵ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance and Unexploded Bombs, 36-37.

²⁴⁶ The *Artieri d'Arresto* units requested by the Italian Ministry of War were: 11th, 12th, 13th, 163rd, 164th. Notable is the fact that these formations were described as “well trained and equipped”, a fact that, as examined in the previous chapter, was not completely true at least for the 13th and 164th companies.

obtaining a favorable answer, the Italian Ministry of War proposed, as an alternative solution, the allocation of the only specialized personnel to be organized in some units under the name of “Bonifica Campi Minati” (Mine Clearance). Only toward the end, in just two lines, the document introduced a residual option to employ civilians “carefully chosen and trained.” However, this last hypothesis was assessed as less effective and not rapid enough.²⁴⁷

Exactly one week later, the Army Subcommittee rejected both the plan to make available the *Artieri d'Arresto* companies and form new units, and the plan to redistribute the engineers spread around the *Regio Esercito*. However, the most significant part of the letter was in the statement that “at this stage of War, Civilians, and not the Italian Army, must be used for this purpose.”²⁴⁸ Supporting this plan, the Army Subcommittee took the initiative to “suggest” to employ as trainers 30 Italian officers and NCOs recently graduated from a mine clearance course.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, 136-137.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Allegato N° 6

ESITO esperimento dei partecipanti al corso addestramento mine

n°	grado	casato e nome	Regimento di appartenenza	punteggio di classifica	idoneità
1	Tenente	Mendola Pantaleone	9° Reg. to Genio	12,67	idoneo
2	S.Ten.te	Satriano Luigi	" " "	12=	idoneo
3	"	Garofalo Raffaele	" " "	16,33	idoneo
4	"	Casati Carlo	" " "	15=	idoneo
5	Tenente	Bonfi Renato	10° " "	13,67	idoneo
6	"	Cattaneo Biagio	" " "	14=	idoneo
7	S.Ten.te	Visconti Carmine	" " "	12,33	idoneo
8	"	Molteni Giovanni	" " "	14=	idoneo
9	"	Regosa Gastone	XXXI° C.A.	17,67	idoneo
10	"	Calabrò Franco	" " "	17,67	idoneo
11	serg.Mag.	Veronese Mario	9° Reg.Genio	9,67	<u>non idoneo</u>
12	"	Compagnari Adel.	" " "	12=	idoneo
13	"	Scaparrotti Ant.	" " "	12=	idoneo
14	"	Sanza Giuseppe	" " "	9,67	<u>non idoneo</u>
15	sergente	Andreotta Ant.	" " "	14=	idoneo
16	"	Contentino Gius.	" " "	12=	idoneo
17	"	D'Elia Nicola	" " "	12,67	idoneo
18	"	Simone Beniamino	" " "	12=	idoneo
19	serg.mag.	Sebeto Antonio	10° " "	7,33	<u>non idoneo</u>
20	"	Di Simino Rocco	" " "	14,67	idoneo
21	"	Cangemi Vincenzo	" " "	13,33	idoneo
22	"	Ianniacccone Isid.	" " "	13=	idoneo
23	"	Bianchi Giovanni	" " "	15=	idoneo
24	"	Ottaviani "	" " "	13,67	idoneo
25	sergente	Isella Luigi	" " "	15,33	idoneo
26	"	Artioli Giovanni	" " "	15=	idoneo
27	serg.mag.	Benincosa Arturo	XXXI° C.A.	14=	idoneo
28	"	Giglio Salvatore	" " "	13=	idoneo
29	"	Scaniglis Emanuele	" " "	9,33	<u>non idoneo</u>
30	"	Mauro Vincenzo	" " "	12=	idoneo

S.Maria C.V. 15 agosto 1944

L'Ufficiale addetto (Cap. Ronga Felice) *Felice Ronga*

Il direttore del corso (Cap. Milio Praticelli) *Praticelli*

L'istruttore del REDT (Serg. Pilkington) *Pilkington*

Figure 20. List of the Italian Engineers Graduated from the Course in Capua

Source: Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Relazione sul corso di addestramento di personale del genio all'impiego di mine, svolto dagli alleati in Capua presso il campo di addestramento n. 64.

NOTE: The document shows that, among the 30 attendees, four NCOs were not qualified as instructors but only as operators.

At the beginning of July 1944, the Italian Army, given the assumption that in the immediate future mine clearance operations would also involve British and American

mines, requested the Allies to train a limited number of soldiers as instructors on this subject. As part of reconstruction process of the Italian Army capabilities, the final objective was to set up a training center and organized five mobile training teams to educate the entire Italian Army on this matter.²⁵⁰ The proposal was accepted, and 10 officers and 20 NCOs were sent to attend a course at the British Royal Engineer Depot in Capua, near Caserta, from August 2, 1944, to August 15, 1944. To underline the Italians' interest in this instruction, an Italian officer, Capitan Felice Ronga, was sent as supervisor with the already assigned task to organize the future training among the units of the *Regio Esercito*.²⁵¹ There were neither expectations nor plans to employ these instructors in support of civilians, as instead advised, if not more properly directed, by the AC HQ.

²⁵⁰ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Rimozione campi minati, letter from Italian Inspector of the Engineer Corps to AAI HQ dated 9 July 1944.

²⁵¹ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Relazione sul corso di addestramento di personale del genio all'impiego di mine, svolto dagli alleati in Capua presso il campo di addestramento n. 64.

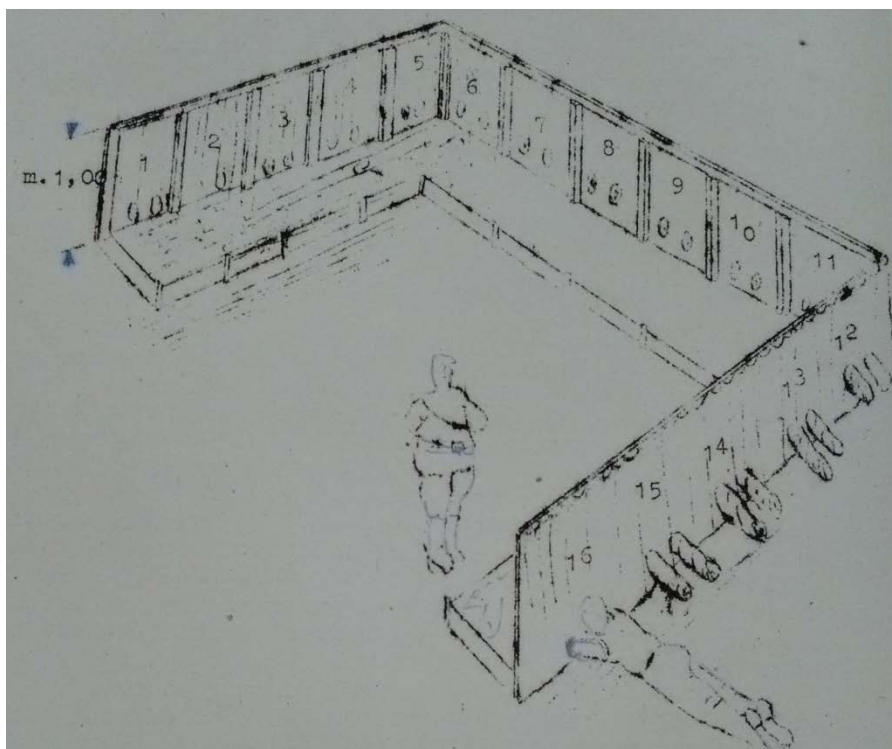


Figure 21. Moascar Training Area

Source: Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Addestramento personale del genio all'impiego di mine antiuomo ed anticarro negli eserciti anglo americani, letter 5453 dated August 11, 1944.

NOTE: According to what was reported by Capitan Ronga, the Moascar training area took its name from a small village in Egypt where the Allies created this type of training area for the first time. The idea behind this structure was to verify the trainees' ability to recognize the ordnance and deactivate it in an uncomfortable position and without being able to observe it visually.

Therefore, in accordance with the received directions, on September 11, 1944, the Italian Minister of War, Alessandro Casati, addressed to the Army Subcommittee the Italian scheme for the employment of civilians, structured around the following most relevant points:

1. The hiring of an initial number of 1,500 people, drawn from the Partisans or already specialized personnel, to be organizing in squads of 10 men composed of one squad leader, one driver, and eight operators.²⁵²
2. The establishment of military teams of supervisors, each of one in the lead of a group of 10 squads and composed of one officer and three NCOs, for a total of 15 officers and 45 NCOs.
3. The constitution of five training centers, on a regional basis, in areas where the operators would be able to work after their graduation from a course lasting between 15 and 20 days.
4. The assignment by the Allies of 175 light trucks—then reduced to 150—and the related fuel.
5. The provision of “as many mine detectors as possible.”²⁵³

On September 22, AFHQ approved the plan in principle but also introduced some constraints, requesting a preliminary screening of the civilians, limiting the instruction to only the models of mines laid in Italy, and prohibiting access to any secret information about German equipment and Allied bomb disposal operations.²⁵⁴

Having obtained approval, this structure would become the *Servizio Bonifica Campi Minati* (Service of Land Reclamation of Minefields) more simply known as the BCM Service, in charge of various functions including the management and supervision

²⁵² Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, 74-75.

²⁵³ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, 120-121.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

of the training centers and clearance operations, the administration of the civilian personnel, the allocation of minefield areas in order to carry out their reclamation, and responsibility for management of private contractors, when, starting from the second half of the 1945, this additional solution was introduced.

Concerning this last aspect, it is to be emphasized that some Allied administrators were already considering the hiring of private firms at the time the BCM Service was created. In particular, between September and October 1944, Lieutenant Colonel A.D. Bonham-Carter, Provincial Executive Officer for Region IV, decided to solicit bids for the mine clearance operations in his territories. However, concerns about competencies and the most appropriate way to assess the estimated costs, increasingly appeared within the AC HQ, which therefore, decided to ask question the Italian Government about this matter.²⁵⁵ Having received the necessary details, the Italians strongly opposed to this plan, due to the potential conflicts with the newly organized service, the absence of any assurance on the quality of the work, and the primary interest of the firms to gain the maximum profit.²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, one month later Colonel Charles Poletti, by that time Regional Commissioner AMG for Region IV, supported by Bonham-Carter, proposed this idea again, reporting the availability of 18 firms ready to take the job. Remarkable is the fact that, in support of his position, Poletti emphasized the poor performance of the 561st Mine Clearance Company and the idea that, in the absence of any established

²⁵⁵ The best lowest offer was of 23,080,000 Lire meanwhile the highest of 45,000,000 Lire. Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports, Correspondence November 1944–January 1945, 87.

²⁵⁶ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, 129-140.

parameter, the contract would have been “a helpful standard by which to measure cost.”²⁵⁷ As usual in such cases, the matter became the object of discussion at the higher level between the Italians and Allies and after various correspondences, the Italian Ministry of War assessed the solution again as unacceptable.²⁵⁸ This circumstance and the persistent doubts among some members of the AC definitively closed the door on the project.

According to various reports, by the end of September, the original Italian scheme, approved by AFHQ with few modifications, was making its first steps with the gradual activation of the five regional training centers, which were located in Capua for the Southern Region, in San Martino al Cimino for Region IV, in Chieti and Spoleto for Region V, and in Pisa for Region VIII.²⁵⁹ Each group of instructors was named as a Mine Clearance Squad with a serial number, composed of six personnel and included in the logistic category ITI-ITI.²⁶⁰ They would represent the real engine for the future establishment of the BCM Service but, as for the Mine Clearance Companies, the process was severely jeopardized by the critical logistic conditions. There were only two trucks

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 35-36.

²⁵⁸ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Correspondence, October-November 1944, accessed April 2, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000623/8BIT/10000_105_000623.djvu, 113-114.

²⁵⁹ Orbetello was initially planned as a location for a training center but subsequently never activated. Numerous other training centers would flourish starting in March 1945 in various cities of central and northern Italy. Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, 33.

²⁶⁰ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, 92, 121.

for each center, no mine detectors, and the procedure for the provision of gasoline was not clear because, apparently, regulations had forbidden the Allies from supplying the Italian units that remained under their own national responsibility.²⁶¹

During the following weeks, considering the difficulties in receiving Anglo-American transportation, the Italian Ministry of War proposed the relocation of 150 vehicles from Sardinia, but the MMIA rejected this plan, stating that “the provision of transport from Italian Army sources for this task cannot be granted” and that the responsibility for solving the problem had to rely on the Administrative Section of AC HQ.²⁶² However, from 45 to 60 vehicles, requisitioned by the Allies, were eventually provided by the end of October and more or less during the same period, a procedure to obtain petrol from the *Comitato Italiano Petroli* was eventually established even if quite complicated and full of bureaucracy.²⁶³

Among the engineer equipment, the most important deficiencies remained in the provision of mine detectors. Subject to many requests, the Allies informed the Italians that, at least in the near term, they were unable to supply either British or American mine detectors. Consequently, the only solution was to build Italian models by means of the national industry.²⁶⁴ Struggling for the collection of raw materials and also even for the

²⁶¹ Ibid., 128.

²⁶² Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, 97-98.

²⁶³ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, 10-12; Ministero della Guerra, Servizio BCM. Automezzi per la BCM, letter dated October 24, 1944.

²⁶⁴ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, 70.

provision of electricity to the factory, work to assemble 60 instruments finally began in October, still hoping for further support from the Allies.²⁶⁵ An additional problem, easily solved, was the provision of mines to be used as training aids at the training centers. Nevertheless, what is more significant in this case is the evidently limited level of independence retained by the Italian Army, which was able to collect this ordnance only under AFHQ G-5's authorization.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, 41-42; Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, 30.

²⁶⁶ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, 37, 110, 125-126.

COMMUNIQUE

The War Ministry is organizing a service in order to remove as soon as possible all the mines and explosives, that are in the liberated territory and are proving a danger to public safety and to agriculture.

The mine removal service will be entrusted mostly to squads of civilians duly equipped and trained in courses about to be formed in various localities.

All former servicemen with the qualification of mechanics, mine layers and the like who wish to participate in this service shall address their application on ordinary paper to the War Ministry-Inspectorate of the Corps of the Engineers, Mine-Removal Service. *(See address)*

The salaries, food and insurance will be made known with another communique. *Any possibility of more details*

Figure 22. An Extract of the First Announcement
of Civilian Recruitment

Source: Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. I, accessed April 9, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/105/000621/8BIT/10000_105_000621.djvu, 73.

The recruitment of volunteer operators proceeded at different speeds among the different regions. In Pisa, many civilians, including many Partisans, soon applied for the first course and with its dependent training center in Lucca and then Pistoia, this center soon became one of the most efficient on the Italian territory. The center in Spoleto was activated a few weeks later and when, in November, an Allied Officer went to visit the school, located in a church, he reported as the most relevant problem the deficiencies in logistics. Nevertheless, an interesting anecdote is described in this document, when the Allied Officer, noting the presence of a very enthusiastic officer in charge of the

instruction of those 20 men, questioned him about his feelings about the future of these operators. What the Italian replied was that his impression was “that some of these men come in for the pay and the extra rations, and that when the mines go ‘off’ so will the men.”²⁶⁷ Most probably, this happened to some degree but never to such an extent that it hampered the functionality of the BCM Service. For instance, the first course in Chieti, completed on November 24, 1944, graduated 37 operators who were placed under the technical supervision of the 562nd Mine Clearance Company, by the end of the year had removed 3,200 mines, suffering a quite high rate of casualties with 3 killed and 6 wounded.²⁶⁸ However, a quite unique problem emerged in Capua due to the absence of people willing to qualify in this work, which, as Major General Crivaro stated in one of his reports, was most probably considered too perilous in that area, faced with a relatively low pay rate and better job opportunities.²⁶⁹

In general, the terms of payment and other benefits, such as clothes and rations, depended on many different factors, for example, marital status and the number of children. Furthermore, they were revised several times during the examined period, and frequent differences also occurred from region to region during the same period. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to review some of the most interesting aspects that emerged during this study.

²⁶⁷ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, Vol. II, 33-33.

²⁶⁸ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports, Vol. I, 13, 19-20, 255.

²⁶⁹ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio 242, Ministero della Guerra, Ufficio Centrale BCM, Bonifica Campi Minati in Provincia di Frosinone, letter prot. n. VIII/60897, dated November 13, 1944.

One of the most significant circumstances is certainly the contrast that emerged in October 1944, between Italian General Director of the Engineers, Major General Crivaro, and the Italian General Treasury in relation to the basic allowance rate to provide to civilian mine clearance operators. For reasons not clearly defined, the financial department was planning to limit the basic allowance pay of the operators to 60 Lire instead of the 80 initially planned. Underlining the difficulties already present in recruiting civilian workers and reporting that a generic payment for an industrial occupation was of 170 Lire per day, without any risks or obligation to stay away from home, the Chief of the Engineer Department strongly opposed to this reform and most probably, with favorable result.²⁷⁰

Another remarkable fact was the review of the criteria related to the providing of a reward of 5 Lire for each mine removed. After a few weeks of activities, the BCM Central Office recognized that the principle to remunerate the additional allowance only in relation of the absolute number of mines lifted or destroyed was not fair. The focal point was that the clearance operations were obviously slower in steep terrain than in cultivated and open fields, and the initial criteria would have given advantages to the operators working and risking at a lower level. Consequently, the new criterion was to classify the terrains in three categories of difficulty and rearticulate the reward as 5, 10, or 15 Lire, ranging from the easiest to the most difficult nature of the ground.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Direzione Generale del Genio, Ufficio Amministrativo, letter IV/32312/A dated October 17, 1944.

²⁷¹ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Correspondence, October-November 1944, 3-5.

However, this new criterion represented an overall improvement considering that the minimum reward remained unchanged but new opportunities for higher bonuses were introduced. Nevertheless, it remains certainly questionable how to objectively assess the level of difficulties represented by different terrains.

Furthermore, taking as example an unmarried worker operating under the BCM Service in the Italian-controlled territories, it is possible to provide some indication of the gross wage rate. Therefore, in December 1944 his basic allowance, for each working day, would be composed of 173 Lire if qualified as *capo rastrellatore* (chief operator) or 158 Lire if generic *rastrellatore* (operator), to which was added the previous cited bonus per single mine.²⁷² By July 1945, the payment for a similar *rastrellatore* would be articulated as a basic allowance of 271 Lire per day, including holidays and weekends, plus 217 Lire as risk compensation per each active working day, and 200 Lire as optional daily allowance for each night spent away from the place of residence. The only difference for the *capo rastrellatore* would be in an increased basic payment of 291 Lire.²⁷³ This was a significant improvement, compared to the initial allowance of 80 Lire per day defined in October 1944. However, in the following months, the extremely dangerous nature of the work and the increasing cost of living would result in strikes and protests, with the

²⁷² Ibid., 3-5.

²⁷³ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Direzione Generale del Genio, Ufficio Centrale BCM, Modalità circa le attività di bonifica dei campi minati delle provincie italiane, 8.

working unions demanding significant increases in the salary and additional benefits, including the same tobacco ration as provided to soldiers.²⁷⁴

The organization of the BCM Service evolved over time in order to adapt to different aspects such as the military advance of the Italian Campaign, the resources available, and the handing back of the territories to the Italian Government. Nevertheless, the core structure remained essentially unchanged at least until the end of the emergency phase. At the head of the structure, there was the BCM Central Office, part of the Engineer General Department of the Italian Ministry of War. The territory was organized in areas defined as BCM zones, administered by a senior officer, and, each of these was divided into BCM sub-zones, headed by a junior officer and organized into two or more Italian geographical provinces grouped in a way to balance the quantity of mined areas. Each sub-zone retained the control of multiple squads that at least starting in July 1945, when the procedure began to be more consolidated, were composed of one civilian qualified as *capo rastrellatore* (chief operator) and three other civilians qualified as *rastrellatore* (operator) for a total of four operators.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ For instance, in October 1945, the national union of the BCM squads requested to replace the basic and risk allowance with a single payment of 800 Lire per day, including holidays, and to increase the offside working quote from 200 Lire to 400 lire of the overnight daily allowance.

²⁷⁵ Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Direzione Generale del Genio, Ufficio Centrale Bonifica Campi Minati, Memoria circa le attività di bonifica campi minati delle provincie italiane, dated July 15, 1945.

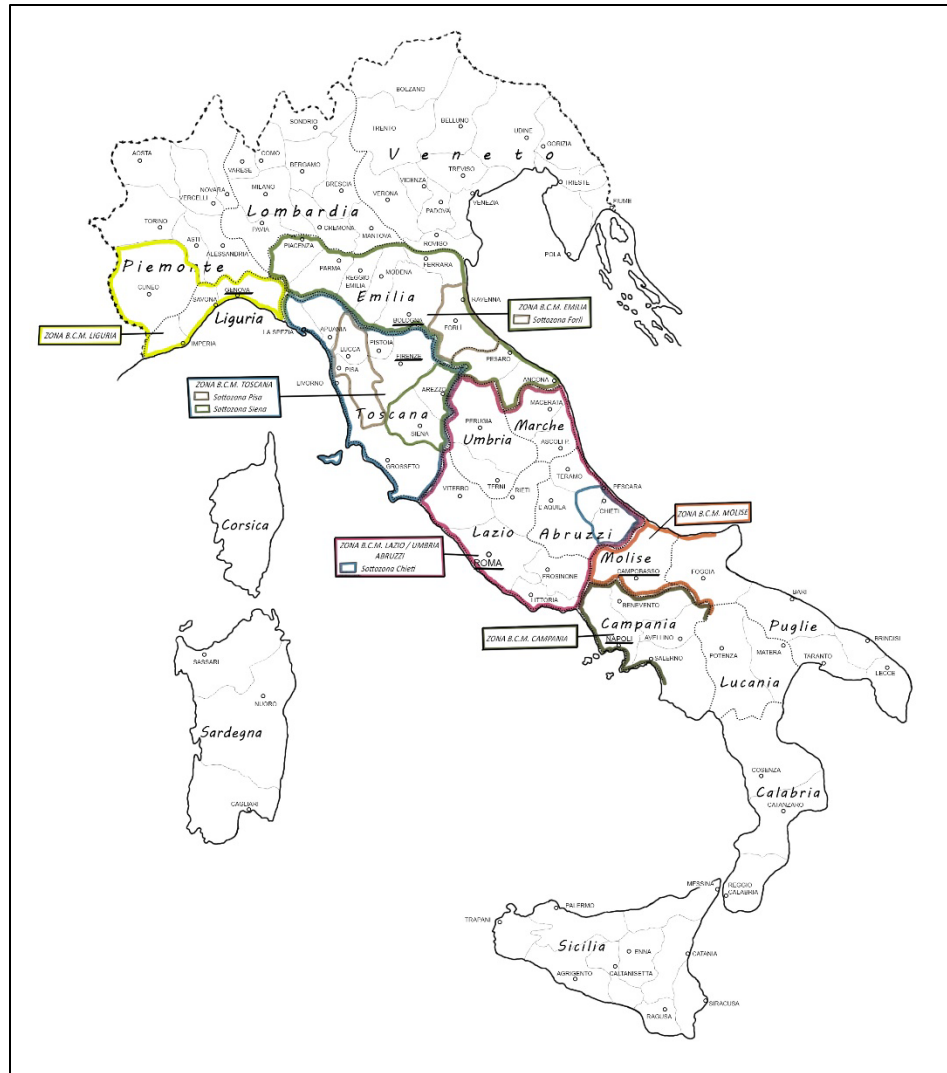


Figure 23. Territorial Organization of the *Servizio Bonifica Campi Minati* as of May 1945

Source: Istituto Storico e di Cultura dell'Arma del Genio, Folder 242, Ministero della Guerra, Schema proposto per l'impiego di prigionieri tedeschi di guerra nella bonifica campi minati in Italia con appendice, Appendix A1, Carta d'Italia con l'indicazione delle zone BCM, dated May 1945. Modified by author.

Once fully operational, the working plan of the sub-zone was defined by the Italian provincial authorities or by the AMG HQ, where still operating, and coordinated with the local prefects. However, the priorities of works were established in this order:

1. Lines of communication.
2. Public works and utilities (i.e., pipelines, electric supply lines, water channels).
3. Ports and large towns.
4. Battlefield areas.
5. Agricultural areas and generic terrain.²⁷⁶

The resulting work programs were to be made public and no changes were authorized if not under direction of the prefect or BCM leadership. This decision was made to maintain the right priority, despite being under the pressure of private and public organizations, pressing to have their territories cleared first.

To complicate this aspect, the BCM Service began to receive an increasing number of false reports of mined areas, starting from the end of the war. In order to limit the consequent waste of money, time, and resources, the most immediate solution was to include in the land reclamation form a mandatory set of information such as when the minefield was supposedly emplaced and by whom, indication about known casualties among the civilians, and the description of any other possible evidence of danger, such as the presence of dead animals or similar signs. For this reason, but also to limit the employment of illegal and self-appointed mine clearers, it was subsequently determined to have the landowners share the total costs of the operation conducted by the Italian Government, with a quota ranging from one-third to one-half the total expense.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ For the agricultural areas, the direction was to follow the planting time as an additional consideration.

²⁷⁷ Pending BCM Central Office, the landowners were also authorized to hire private companies by themselves, receiving a reimbursement in the amount of one-third to one-half of the total cost.

As already examined to some extent in chapter 3, another matter of concern for the safeguarding of the population was the clearance of surplus and abandoned ammunition from the Italian territory. During the same months when the BCM Service was organized, the *Direzione Generale d'Artiglieria* (General Artillery Directorate) of the Ministry of War became primarily responsible for these activities, even if as already discussed, bomb disposal operations were also performed by mine clearance teams as a collateral task, whenever necessary and possible. The scheme of the organization was very similar to the BCM Service and therefore formed by a central office and various subordinate commands, named *Comando Artiglieria Territoriale* (Territorial Artillery HQs) responsible for the activities performed by the Italian bomb disposal squads and the contracted civilians and firms in their assigned areas of responsibility.

The activities were not limited only to the disposal of ammunition but also included the lifting and as much as possible, the salvage of valuable materials.²⁷⁸ Under the strict control of the MMIA, these latter resources were demilitarized and then retained by the firms, if that condition was included in the terms of the contract, or handed over to the *Azienda Recupero Alienazione Residuati*—company for the acquisition of residual war materials—the official agent of the Italian Government responsible for the reintroducing of any suitable component parts into the national market and organization.²⁷⁹ As defined by the AFHQ policy released on October 2, 1945, the

²⁷⁸ Italian National Archives, Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition February 1945-March 1946, 92.

²⁷⁹ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), 8/Q/9 Directives and Instructions issued by 'Q' MMIA,

responsibility of *Direzione Generale d'Artiglieria* was intended to be limited to the ammunition of Italian ownership and the enemy captured material of Italian origin.²⁸⁰ Meanwhile, activities concerning the Anglo-American surplus materials were possible only under the release of the necessary guarantees by Allied sources, which seems to have happened increasingly starting the second half of 1946.²⁸¹

In October 1945, the Italian Government, during the process of regulating the mine clearance activities by law, planned to hand over the responsibilities for the operations from the Ministry of War to the Ministry of Public Works, assuming that at that stage, the services were directed at national rehabilitation and no longer related to military efforts.²⁸² However, in the *Decreto Legislativo Luogotenenziale* (Legislative Decree of the Lieutenant of the King)²⁸³ number 320, dated April 12, 1946, all responsibilities remained with the Ministry of War.²⁸⁴ This law, titled “Bonifica dei

accessed March 15, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/004142/8BIT/10000_120_004142.djvu, 31.

²⁸⁰ Italian National Archives, Allied Control Commission and Allied Military Government, Italy (1943-1947), Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition November 1946-August 1947, accessed April 12, 2017, http://90.147.68.248/ACC_IMM/10000/120/002079/8BIT/10000_120_002079.djvu, 35-36.

²⁸¹ Italian National Archives, Q 131 Clearance and Disposal of Ammunition February 1945-March 1946, 7, 37.

²⁸² Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, General Correspondence, September 1- December 1945, 17-18.

²⁸³ Usually a law would be signed by the king, but since there was no king at this time, this decree was signed by Prince Umberto. Thus, this decree was fully equivalent to a royal decree, promulgated by the sovereign.

²⁸⁴ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, General Correspondence, September 1- December 1945, 17-18.

campi minati,” which was originally intended to be released on January 1, 1946 and was finally enforced on May 24, would be the basis for all the future activities and competencies and with a few changes, would remain in force until October 8, 2010.

The emergency phase of the mine clearance and other ERW removal operations was declared officially concluded by the Italian Government on June 30, 1948.

Unfortunately, considering the progressive development of the operations and the multitude of problems examined during this study, there is no comprehensive document among the primary sources providing a complete report in terms of numbers and resources committed to this effort. Nevertheless, some relevant information is available. In September 1945, the Civil Affairs Section of AC HQ assumed the total presence of mines on the Italian territory to have been about 6 million, of which 1.5 million were already neutralized.²⁸⁵ The number of the civilian operators was estimated at 1,500 men, even though that figure was subject to considerable fluctuation because many workers decided to quit this dangerous job after a few months.²⁸⁶ The Italian Government allocated 3.50 billion Lire for mine clearance and other ERW removal operations for the fiscal years 1947 and 1948. This amount, which also included the costs for the associated civilian personnel, represented about 18 percent of the total budget of 18.88 billion Lire and more than what was allocated for ordinary expense of the entire Army or Navy.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports from Regions, Mine Clearing Convoys, etc., including Final Report, 7.

²⁸⁶ Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance Scheme (use of surrendered personnel) Correspondence, 18; Italian National Archives, Mine Clearance, Reports from Regions, Mine Clearing Convoys, etc., including Final Report, 19.

²⁸⁷ Decreto Legislativo 25 marzo 1948, n. 189, Stato di previsione della spesa del Ministero della difesa per l'esercizio finanziario 1947-48, article 3, accessed April 11,

Not official but certainly impressive are the proposed numbers related to the overall activities, provided by one of the few Italian sources and summarized in the following table.

Table 2. Estimated Ordnance Disposed of by the end of the Emergency Phase

BCM Service		Artillery Directorate	
Area cleared	Over 200,000 hectares	Municipalities checked	6,721
Mines destroyed or lifted	12 million	Ordnance disposed	13 million
ERW destroyed	20,000 tons	Ordnance lifted	100 million
Aerial bombs	4,000 tons	Explosive destroyed	2,250 tons

Source: Pietro Billone, *La bonifica dei campi minati ed altri ordigni bellici in Italia dal 1944 al 1948* (Bologna, Italy: Tipostampa Bolognese, 1984), 46.

Finally, but most important, at the end of the emergency phase the casualties among the operators were estimated at 174 soldiers and 393 civilians killed during mine clearance activities and another 260 people killed among military and civilians while performing ordnance disposal operations.²⁸⁸ A total of 827 lives given to this cause, to which certainly would be added a much higher and unknown number of civilians among the entire Italian population killed from the beginning of the war until now.

2017, <http://www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1948-03-31&atto.codiceRedazionale=048U0189>.

²⁸⁸ Pietro Billone, *La bonifica dei campi minati ed altri ordigni bellici in Italia dal 1944 al 1948* (Bologna, Italy: Tipostampa Bolognese, 1984), 46.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have seen the devastation caused by these indiscriminate weapons, which hamper reconstruction, damage the environment, and cause grievous injuries and death for decades after conflicts end. My fervent hope is that the world will one day be free from the threats caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war.²⁸⁹

— Ban Ki-moon, *The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Actions 2013-2018*

Conclusions

By the end of the conflict, the problem of the mine clearance and ERW removal represented a reason for significant concerns for all of Europe. The most immediate and urgent task was to remove the thousands of mines that were hampering the reconstruction and hindering the economic development for the reasons extensively examined in the previous chapters. According to some estimates, about 35 million landmines laid during that conflict were cleared in Europe during the period from 1943 to 1990, without considering another 58.5 million removed in Soviet territories and imprecisely defined numbers of mines in the North African area.²⁹⁰

Nevertheless, as extensively discussed, in Italy starting in September 1943, this problem assumed its own dimension as part of the more complex process of rehabilitation after 20 years of Fascist Government and three years of war. These last two factors

²⁸⁹ United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), *The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018* (New York: United Nations, 2015), accessed April 18, 2017, http://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/publications/mine_action_strategy_mar15.pdf.

²⁹⁰ Mike Croll, *The History of Landmines* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Book, 1998), 95

summed together had already absorbed the majority of the physical and most probably, moral resources in the entire nation of Italy by that time.²⁹¹ Many aspects of this study have been examined from time to time in the previous chapters, but some of them merit further discussion in these final pages.

The different views, perspectives, and cultural attitudes between Italians and Allies indeed represent a relevant point. For sure, the context of how the two armistices developed and were signed, and the resulting rapid transition of the Italian status from enemy to co-belligerent in only a few weeks, assumed a determinative role in this outcome. However, Anglo-American diffidence towards the Italians clearly emerged at least during the period from September to December 1943 and to some extent, also remained during the following months. Remarkable among the considerable evidence of this was the decision to not share the Allied technologies in building mine detectors with their co-belligerent until almost the end of the war, although these instruments were of a purely defensive nature and necessary to the Italians, in the face of the extremely limited capabilities of their own models. Moved into a modern context, this point strongly supports the concept underlined by the existing joint doctrine: “understanding cultural context, cognitive orientation patterns, and communication methods is essential” to sustaining unified actions during military operations.²⁹²

²⁹¹ The majority of the population was hoping in an immediate conclusion of the conflict and, instead, found themselves involved in a more bloody and violent fighting.

²⁹² US Joint Chief of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2011), I-9, III-17.

Related to this point, the control, then transitioning into supervision, assumed by the Allies over the Italian Government and the Italian Armed Forces. In a recent history characterized by the disastrous effects caused by the complete annihilation of dictatorial regimes as occurred in Iraq and Libya, the Anglo-American decision, strongly supported by General Eisenhower, to still rely on Italian administrators, appears relevant. By limiting the purging actions to only removing the Fascist party members and the disbanding of all associated corporative structures, the Allies not only limited their commitments in terms of personnel and resources but also facilitated the gradual handover of territories to the Italian authorities. Nevertheless, as discussed, interests and priorities remained different, as in the case of the mine clearance and ERW removal problem, creating sometimes diverging opinions but also a sense of impotence and frustration among the administrators.

Concerning the Italian military conditions, the control performed by the Allies through the AC significantly shaped the Armed Forces' capabilities and roles, resulting, also in this case, in both positive and negative outcomes. On the one hand, the *Comando Supremo*'s September 1943 demand and insistence on committing entire divisions to fight against the Germans and the RSI appeared unrealistic and completely disconnected from a reality characterized by the total absence of logistic resources and limited command and control capabilities. On the other hand, the strict impositions on the Army personnel numbers and the requisition policy actuated during weeks following the armistices, further hampered any possibility, even if remote, of committing a significant number of Italian troops to the fight.

In this sense, the Allied decision to deny the development of the Italian plan to commit 16 engineer companies for this cause was also significant. With a total of about 3,600 troops, these units represented less than one percent of the strength of the *Regio Esercito* and even if not willing to release troops from their duties, a further option would have been to raise numbers in the Italian Army. Apart from evident contrasting views, the real reasons supporting this Allied decision remain unclear, even if it is possible to speculate that it was more a question of sustaining the policy to commit all forces and resources to defeating the enemy, rather than a real impossibility to make these units available. Nevertheless, the civilian population certainly paid a heavy price for this decision.

As a final and most relevant consideration, there is the evaluation of the degree of success eventually achieved by Italians and Allies in solving the problem of mine clearance and ERW removal through the solution initiated in July 1944. This assessment has an impact in the present. Today, the BCM Service still exists and operates as part of the Italian Ministry of War even if reduced to only the Central Office and two detached subsections, one in charge of all the regions located to the north of the Gothic line, or being part of it, and the other responsible for all the remaining territories, including the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Now as then, this structure retains the lead for the overall control of ERW disposal operations and the certification of the Italian civilian companies operating in this field.²⁹³

²⁹³ Ministero della Difesa, *Bonifiche da ordigni esplosivi residuati bellici*, accessed April 17, 2017, http://www.difesa.it/SGD-DNA/Staff/DT/GENIODIFE/Pagine/bonifica_ordigni.aspx.

According to some reports provided by the BCM Service, from the years 2010 to 2015, in Italy it has found and disposed of about 37,000 items of ordnance, consisting of an average of about 6,000 per year, more than 16 per day. Excluding those found in the Italian regions, some that were in part or entirely involved in significant battles during the Great War,²⁹⁴ the total number of ordnance is reduced to 30,615. That amount represents about 83 percent of the total and confirms both the harsh fighting that occurred on the Italian mainland and the significant risks to accidentally bumping into unexploded devices. More in detail, the most relevant part of these findings was represented by 15,000 artillery shells, followed by about 8,000 mortar shells. Less relevant in number but certainly most dangerous, were 1,100 aerial bombs, corresponding to an average of two bombs disposed of every three days. However, extremely significant for this study is the fact that only 232 mines, less the one percent of the total, have been found during the examined six years.²⁹⁵ This latter aspect and the unceasing activities of the BCM Service evidently demonstrate the validity of this structure and the quality of the clearance operations performed since 1944.

Mines and other ERW: A Silent Danger Still Today

After more than 75 years since the conclusion of the Second World War and almost a century since the end of the First World War, the trend of ordnance found in the Italian territories does not seem subject to significant reductions, nor is it expected to

²⁹⁴ The Regions excluded from the report are: Trentino Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia, and Veneto.

²⁹⁵ Ministero della Difesa, *Direzione dei Lavori e del Demanio*. I am in debt to the BCM Central Office for their kindness in providing the examined reports.

decrease in the foreseeable future. That is confirmed by evidence in the study released by the United Nations Mine Action Service, according to which unexploded ordnance are likely to affect the countries involved for more than 150 years after the end of a conflict.²⁹⁶

As underlined in the first lines at the beginning of this thesis, unexploded ordnance continues to cause casualties among the Italian population every year. Nevertheless, this is not the only effect, because it also continues to have an impact on the national economy. For example, in order to limit the risks of accidental explosions, various laws and regulations impose accurate preliminary ground checks before proceeding with any excavation work. During such operations that much of the buried ordnance and almost all the aerial bombs are uncovered. Civilian firms, accredited by the BCM Service, retain the task of executing these mandatory search operations, while the disposal operations are exclusively performed by Army explosive ordnance disposal teams embedded in the engineer units spread throughout Italian territory.²⁹⁷

It is not possible to estimate the practical impact of this problem on the Italian economy, but a recent clearance operation concluded in Vicenza, to make safe an area formerly occupied by an airport during the last conflict, may provide some interesting considerations. Consisting of a surface of 567,161 square meters to be checked down to a depth of six meters, the operation eventually resulted in about three years of work, from

²⁹⁶ United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), *Mines Handbook*, 3rd ed, (New York: United Nations, 2015), accessed April 10, 2017, http://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/publications/Handbook_English.pdf, 21.

²⁹⁷ Esercito Italiano, Rapporto Esercito 2013, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.esercito.difesa.it/comunicazione/editoria/Rapporto-Esercito/Documents/Rapporto-Esercito-2013.pdf>, 36.

2013 to 2016, and a cost of 1,619,726 Euro (about \$1,733,107), which does not include the expenses assumed by the Italian Army in employing its personnel and resources during the numerous disposal operations.²⁹⁸

However, as much or more than in Italy, in many other countries around the world, mines and other ERW represent a reason for deep concerns. Armed conflicts on a regional scale and civil wars still expose populations and territories to these threats, and hundreds of civilian casualties are reported by accredited international organizations every year.²⁹⁹ We should expect this to continue. Since the end of the Second World War, landmines have continued to evolve in order to counter the developing capabilities of the adversary for their detection. Consequently, new technologies such as air-dropped and anti-handling devices have been included, and almost all of these modern ordnance are characterized by the total absence of metallic parts. The most obvious consequence is that the subsequent demining activities are extremely more dangerous and to such extent that the same army that emplaced the mines is generally unwilling to take the risk involved in the conducting these clearance operations.³⁰⁰ The ghosts of the past still haunt us.

²⁹⁸ Città di Vicenza, gare per servizi, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.comune.vicenza.it/albo3/servizi.php/94200>.

²⁹⁹ UNMAS, *The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018*.

³⁰⁰ Rae McGrath, *Landmines and Unexploded Ordnance* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 12, 17, 21.

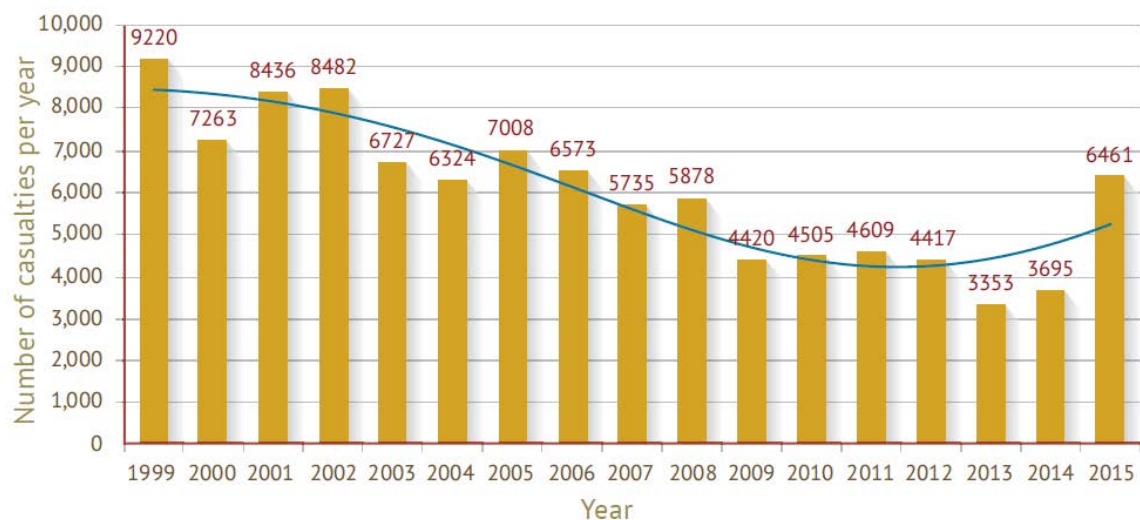


Figure 24. Reported Number of Mine/ERW Casualties per year in the World

Source: Monitoring and Research Committee, ICBL-CMC Governance Board, Landmine Monitor 2016, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.the-monitor.org/media/2386748/Landmine-Monitor-2016-web.pdf>, 44.

The relatively recent development of cluster bombs has further increased the level of this problem, considering that this ammunition, in its function of “area-denial munition,” produces a final result on the terrain equivalent to that of a minefield. Besides, there has been progressively increased use of improvised explosive devices in attacks against both the military forces and the civilian population.³⁰¹ Nevertheless, even if less notorious than all the types of weapons just mentioned, ERW and its related subcategories, such as abandoned and unexploded ordnance, represent the primary reason for casualties in several countries. For instance, even though Cambodia is one of the most

³⁰¹ Ibid., 17, 21.

mine-affected countries in the world today, casualties there are mainly caused by other ERW rather than by landmines.³⁰²

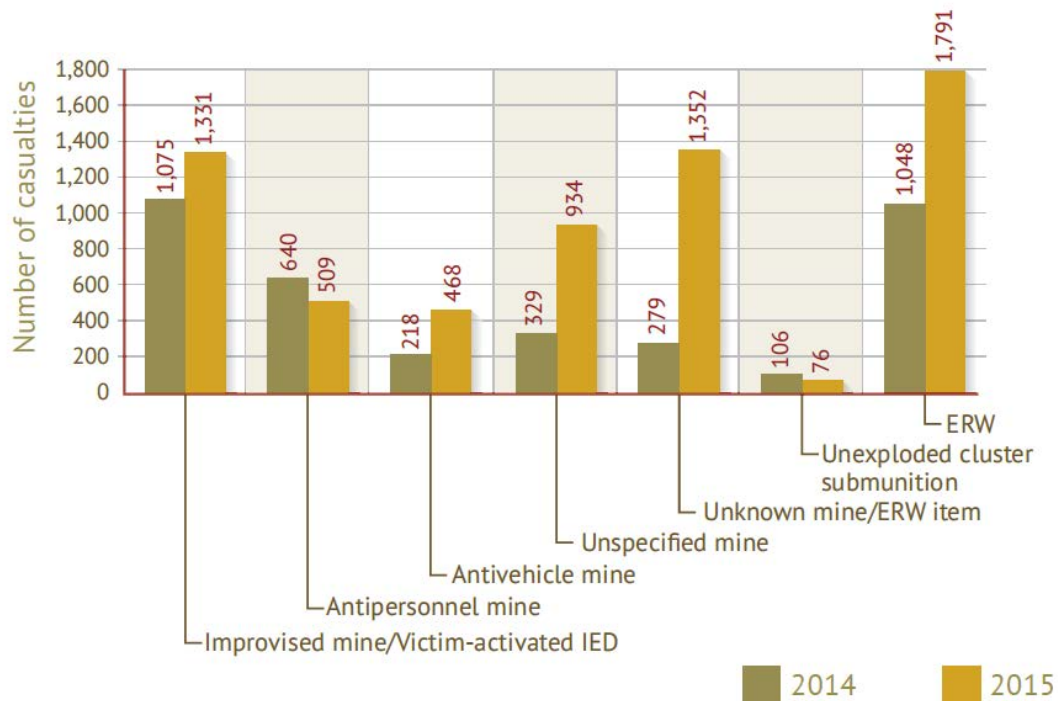


Figure 25. Casualties by Type of Explosive Device in 2014 and 2015

Source: Monitoring and Research Committee, ICBL-CMC Governance Board, Landmine Monitor 2016, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.the-monitor.org/media/2386748/Landmine-Monitor-2016-web.pdf>, 48.

Given the relevance of the problem, the international community has activated various initiatives during recent years. Among the many, the most significant certainly are the International Campaign to Ban Landmines resulting in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, known as Ottawa Convention, signed as for November 2016, by 162 State Parties and a

³⁰² UNMAS, *Mines Handbook*, 22.

similar ban in the Convention on Cluster Munitions, dated 2008, ratified as of August 15, 2016, by 100 State Parties.³⁰³

Worldwide governmental and non-governmental contributors are supporting mine clearance and ERW removal operations in the most affected countries, mainly by providing significant funds. In this sense, the U.S. Government is actively operating in this sector both in support of international organizations and with bilateral programs. Meanwhile, as part of this effort, starting from 1988 in Afghanistan with Operation Safe Passage, in the context of the United Nations Operation SALAM,³⁰⁴ U.S. military teams have deployed in several countries around the world as part of international or government-to-government agreements to conduct mine awareness and “train-the-trainer” activities.³⁰⁵ However, as stated by the United Nations Mine Action Service, despite the consistent progress in the last two decades, significant challenges still remain in solving the mine clearance and ERW removal problem.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor, “Landmine Monitor 2016 Report,” accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.the-monitor.org/media/2386748/Landmine-Monitor-2016-web.pdf>, 1; “Cluster Munition Monitor 2016 Report,” accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.the-monitor.org/media/2394895/Cluster-Munition-Monitor-2016-Web.pdf>, 1.

³⁰⁴ This operation represented the first humanitarian demining activities conducted by US soldiers since the end of the Korean War.

³⁰⁵ Thomas R. Searle, *Cleaning the Way: US Special Operations Forces in the Humanitarian Demining of Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia: 1988-1996* (MacDill AFB, FL: USSOCOM, 1996), 3, 10.

³⁰⁶ UNMAS, *The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018*, 9-10.

Table 3. U.S. Conventional Weapons Destruction
Program Funding History

Budget assigned (in thousands \$)	FY93-10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	*FY15	TOTAL
	1,562,711	163,917	189,858	165,283	175,708	<i>177,058</i>	2,686,090

Source: US Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, *2016 To Walk the Earth in Safety: Conventional Weapons Destruction Funding*, accessed April 18, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/walkearth/2016/263959.htm>.

NOTE: The total amount for each year is the sum of the funds provided by different U.S. departments.³⁰⁷ The number in italics is estimated.

Recommendations

In the conclusion of this study, with its limitations and flaws, these few pages are intended to provide some suggestions of possible interest for future international operations conducted by the U.S. and its allies.

Independent of the nature, intensity, and size of the conflicts, it is certain that if not landmines and cluster munitions, at least ERW will remain a problem in various countries. Furthermore, with the increasing threats represented by the emplacement of improvised explosive devices, the abandoned munitions will provide a practical resource to conduct attacks against military forces and the civilian population. Consequently, from the beginning of the planning phase of every operation, it is necessary to take into account this problem as part of the overall strategic picture and to identify a possible

³⁰⁷ The funds are provided by the following sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Department of Defense; Department of State - Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs; Department of State - Other funding; US Agency for International Development.

solution to implement at least starting from phase IV, stabilize. As this Second World War experience in Italy may teach, it is quite impossible to apply any immediate and definitive solution without an accurate study of the problem and commitment of the necessary resources. Current doctrine mainly limits the conduct of the disposal operations to be part of friendly force protection. Meanwhile, a more comprehensive approach to the mine clearance and ERW problem is necessary, and for this reason it is essential to commit in this process other governmental and international organizations and the local authorities as soon as possible.

Recalling the debated plan to employ German POWs for mine clearance operations against their will, this study suggests the necessity to remind leaders of their responsibility to understand and obey international laws. Just as during the Second World War, this emotional more than rational idea is created by a certain level of violence, destruction, frustration, and lack of immediate resources; we should expect that this may occur again in the future. Furthermore, it is possible to assume that the technological development of new weapons and ammunition might create ambiguities in the application of these laws and conventions that, being too generic, may appear not to impose any limitations. Military and civilian leaders have to be acutely aware of these risks and in their limits and capabilities, avoid the chance that bureaucracy may prevail over the value of human lives.

Furthermore, during future military operations, the constant scarcity of resources and personnel most probably will continue to prevent the commitment of troops in mine clearance and ERW removal operations if that is not a strict tactical necessity. This fact will be further evident in the presence of military forces operating in foreign territories.

Consequently, as already happened in Italy more than 70 years ago, this role will likely be assumed by civilians, leading to two additional considerations for military personnel involved in these operations. The first is that the armed forces will continue to retain classified technologies that will be made unavailable to concerned civilian organizations, increasing the risk and the workload. The second aspect is that the private nature of the clearance activities will continue to represent a risk in terms of balance between the quality of performance and level of training of the civilian workers, and the search for maximum economic profits.

In conclusion, in all these future scenarios, the military leadership and therefore the officer class will be called upon to make crucial and critical decisions on which will depend the future effects not only on the opposing armies but also on the civilian population. Only acting with wisdom and shrewdness will it be possible to limit to the maximum extent any further unnecessary collateral effects. Failure to consider and plan accordingly has the certain effect of making the loss of life in the resulting damage less a case of collateral and more one of intentional.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF REGIONS UNDER ACC-AMG CONTROL

Region I	Sicily
Region II	Lucania, Calabria and, in the advisory sense, Apulia
Region III	Campania, Calabria* and Lucania
Region IV	Lazio-Umbria
Region V	Marche-Abruzzi
Region VI	Sardinia
Region VII	Calabria compartment
Region VIII	Tuscany
Region IX	Emilia
Region X	Liguria
Region XI	Lombardia
Region XII	Venezia
Region XIII	Venezia Giulia
Region XIV	Piedmont

Remarks:

In order to reduce the ACC officers, Region II, III and VII were unified in the Southern Region starting from September 1, 1944.

*Detached from Region II on April 23, 1944

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